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Biblical Ideas of Atonement

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Biblical Ideas of Atonement

Their History and Significance

BY

ERNEST DEWITT BURTON

JOHN MERLIN POWIS SMITH and GERALD BIRNEY SMITH

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PREFACE

The aim of the following chapters is to set forth the content of the biblical teachings upon the subject of Atonement, and to suggest the point of view from which these conceptions may profitably be studied at the present day. The attitude assumed toward the records throughout is that of historical interpretation rather than of theological systematization. Consequently the effort is to discover precisely what ideas of atonement are reflected by the biblical laws, institutions, and utterances.

The historical method of approach to the problem has been chosen as best adapted to the purpose in hand. To trace the history of an idea is to discover the forces that have co-operated to produce it and to transform it from age to age. The history of the idea is thus its best explanation. Yet the purely historical treatment which the subject demands falls short of meeting the natural desire of those who are interested in this aspect of theology. Realizing that most of our readers would desire, not only a historical statement of what was believed and taught by the prophets and teachers of old, but also some indication of the value of those

teachings for the present day, the closing section of the book (chaps. xii, xiii) has been added in an endeavor to meet this legitimate demand.

The history of the idea of atonement in the Christian church lies beyond the line of the task here contemplated, as does likewise the formulation of a theory of atonement valid for modern times. It is enough to have tried to state with accuracy the development of the atonement idea in biblical times and to indicate some results of that biblical development which must enter into the formulation of any satisfactory theory of atonement.

The first eleven chapters were written for publication in the *Biblical World* and appeared in its pages from January, 1908, to January, 1909. The interest in the subject which has been indicated in various ways of late has led the authors to believe that these papers would serve a useful purpose if revised and republished in more accessible form.

The lists of books added as an appendix are not intended to be exhaustive in any sense, but rather to serve as guides to the best in the extensive literature called forth by the general and continuous interest in this central and vital problem of all religion.

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I

THE IDEA OF ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY

JOHN MERLIN POWIS SMITH

Assistant Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, The University of Chicago

CHAPTER I

ATONEMENT IN PREPROPHETIC ISRAEL

The consciousness of sin has been common to all races and all ages. The content of the concept may change with varying degrees of culture and with differing environments; but the concept itself is always and everywhere present. Accompanying this consciousness is the sense of the corresponding need of the divine forgiveness and pardon. All sorts of ideas prevail as to the methods by which, or conditions upon which, such pardon is obtained.[1] These ideas are in every case determined in large part by the prevailing conception of God. Among

[1] These statements are made in full consciousness of the fact so clearly brought out by W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, (2d ed.), pp. 400 ff., viz., that the atoning ritual originally had little to do with sin in any strict sense of the word, "the whole object of ritual" being "to maintain the bond of physical holiness that kept the religious community together." But the many ills to which flesh is heir and the innumerable accidents and calamities of primitive life were speedily interpreted by early man as expressions of the displeasure and anger of the spiritual powers that controlled his life. The occasion of the anger might not be clear to the sufferer, but in any case he sought to propitiate the deity or to exorcise the demon or spirit that tormented him and so to obtain peace. When the affliction was traceable to a deity worshiped by the sufferer the realization of the divine displeasure approximated closely to a sense of sin.

early Semites the deity seems to have been conceived of as forming one of the same community of blood-relations with his worshipers.[1] He is one of the family. The bond of union is the common life which they share. The act of sacrifice thus is an act of communion between the deity and his worshipers. This communion is renewed and strengthened from time to time by participation in a common sacrificial meal. Just as the guest in an Arab's tent becomes temporarily a brother to his host by partaking of his food, so the worshiper relates himself to his god by inviting him to share his meal. The underlying thought is that in eating at a common table they have shared in the same life-giving food, and so common life pulsates within them. They have become one in a most literal sense; the interests of the god are identical with those of his people. Consequently the sure preventive of misfortune and divine chastisement is the maintenance of this identity of interests through frequent sacrificial communion. The element in the sacrifice peculiarly efficacious in cementing the union is the blood. The later codifications of the Hebrew law still retain and recognize at its full value this superior

[1] W. R. Smith., *op cit.*, 2d ed., Lecture II.

efficacy of blood (e. g., Lev. 17:11), although the original significance of its use may have been left far behind in the abysmal past. To the primitive mind blood, as the very embodiment of life, when shared in by worshiper and deity alike, brought about community of life between the two in greater measure than any other kind of sacrificial food.[1]

[1] For a wholly different view of the significance of primitive sacrifice, see R. Campbell Thompson, *Semitic Magic, Its Origins and Developments* (1908), pp. 175–218, where the theory is advanced that the sacrificial animal serves as a substitute-victim offered to the devil or demon whose activity has brought the sacrificer into trouble. The aim of the priest is to entice or drive the malignant spirit out of the sick or sinful man into the sacrificial victim where it can be destroyed or isolated. True though this may be in cases where demons are looked upon as the responsible agents or causes of a man's loss or suffering, it ceases to apply the moment that man becomes ethical in his dealings with the gods and realizes his own personal responsibility for the offenses that arouse their anger. Theft, treachery, unjustifiable homicide, and the like, are sins originating within the heart and as such cannot be atoned for by any exorcism of malignant spirits. No single example of violation of ethical law is cited by Mr. Thompson as having been pardoned by a process of exorcism. Nor is it easy to see how a process of magic such as this could be carried over into the sphere of ethics and become effective there. In cases of bodily sickness, tabu, clean and unclean, and the like, the old ritual of exorcism may easily have been long retained even if it had lost its original significance; but the deepest ills of men were not so easily cured. In irreconcilable conflict with this theory of the transference of a malignant spirit into the body of the sacrificial victim, is the fact that the flesh of the sin-offering is "most holy" and is set aside for the exclusive use of the priests, who

But as experiences vary and multiply with the advance of civilization and "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns," man's conception of God likewise enlarges and advances with equal step. Hence in the course of time it became impossible for the Hebrews to think of God as on the same familiar terms with themselves. He inevitably became more and more exalted and unapproachable. His increasing majesty and holiness caused the old feeling of the family relationship between him and his people to recede into the background of consciousness, yielding

would certainly not have touched it had they thought of it as defiled by the occupation of a demon (Lev. 6:25 ff.; 10: 17 ff;. Num. 18: 9,10.). Closely allied to the view of Mr. Thompson is the theory of sacrifice presented by H. Hubert and M. Mauss in *Melanges d'histoire des religions* (Paris, 1909). The function of sacrifice, according to these two scholars, is "to establish a communication between the sacred world and the profane through the mediation of a victim, i. e., of a consecrated thing which is destroyed in the course of the ceremony" (p. 124). The sacrificial victim is a colorless medium; holiness is conferred upon it by the sacrificial process itself. Hence, the victim may serve to absorb the holiness of a consecrated man and transmit it back to deity whence it came, thus leaving the consecrated one free to return to the sphere of ordinary, profane life; or it may serve to transmit sacredness from the religious world to the profane. In this exchange of sanctity the victim represents both man and God; they meet in the sacrificial offering. The intermediary victim is necessary, since immediate contact of man with deity involves death. Hence the victim serves as the sacrificer's substitute.

place to awe and reverence. Keeping pace with this transformation in the conception of God was a corresponding change in the idea of sacrifice. The old sacrificial meal of which the worshiper and his God partook gave way to the more or less splendid and acceptable gift presented to God by the worshiper. The gift served as an expression of gratitude and love, as a salve to the feelings of the deity outraged by the worshiper's sin, or as a bid for further favors. This conception of sacrifice as a gift is that reflected in most of the Old Testament teachings and usages pertaining to the subject.

From this general consideration of the Hebrew idea of God and the conception of sacrifice we may proceed at once to the history of the idea of atonement in the Old Testament. This history falls naturally into three stages: (1) the age prior to Amos, (2) the period from Amos to Ezra, (3) the post-exilic days. Each of these periods is responsible for the production of a code of laws, viz., the Covenant Code, the Deuteronomic Code, and the Priestly Code, respectively; and each period has alongside of its code a characteristic type of religious thought and teaching. In the first period it is the primitive Mosaic religion as gradually modi-

fied and enriched through contact with Canaanitish civilization and religion; in the second period prophecy finds its full fruition; and in the third the Hebrew philosophers wrought out the universal truths expressed in the Wisdom Literature. The idea of atonement must be traced through these three periods. The present chapter limits itself to the first period.

Sin is the occasion of divine punishment, and calamities in general are interpreted as chastisements for sin (Judg. 9:22 ff.; 20:35; II Sam. 6:7; I Kings 2:31 ff., 44; Exod. 21:12, 15 ff.; 22:18 f.). The penalty for sin against Jehovah is for the most part death; witness the narrative of the Fall and the story of the Deluge. In general, righteousness is the only guarantee of escape and safety from the divine wrath. The connection between sin and punishment is almost automatic, and innocent and guilty not infrequently are alike involved in disaster. Achan's offense brings defeat upon all Israel. David's census subjects the nation to the ravages of the pestilence. Not only so, but the sin of the guilty is often deliberately visited upon the innocent as in the case of the hanging of the grandchildren of Saul to expiate the guilt of

his crime (II Sam. 2:14), or in the death of the child of David and Bathsheba's guilt; cf. the teaching of the second commandment of the Decalogue upon this point, where the emphasis is on the certainty of the punishment.

To this general principle that sin must be punished there were certain exceptions. The data at our disposal are insufficient to enable us to draw a sharp line between pardonable and unpardonable sins, or even to say whether such a distinction was recognized. Some sins evidently were pardonable; as to others we are uninformed beyond the fact that in every case of their occurrence known to us in this period they met with condign punishment. Repentance serves as the occasion and ground of pardon in the case of David when Israel was afflicted by pestilence on account of the census ordered by him (II Sam. 24:15–25). But the contrition of David was reinforced by the offering of sacrifices and the narrative apparently lays at least as much stress upon the outward act as upon the inner feeling. In any case the former is the necessary demonstration of the latter, the guarantee of its sincerity. In the case of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, her good deeds done toward the Hebrew spies atone for her past

wickedness and secure her immunity from the destruction meted out to her fellow-citizens (Josh. 6:25).

But not only were righteousness and goodness considered efficacious in behalf of those characterized by their possession; they were also regarded as inuring to the benefit of others not righteous. The character of the wicked is in no way changed thereby, nor is the divine estimate of them altered; they do but escape the immediate consequences of their guilt, or reap the rewards of another's piety, by virtue of their being bound up in the same bundle of life with him. Of this point of view there are two illustrations in this period, viz., the plea of Abraham in behalf of Sodom (Gen., chap. 18), and the captivity of Joseph which resulted in blessings to his evil-minded brethren. There is here no transferred righteousness nor supererogatory goodness; the benefit accruing to the wicked is only incidental; it is no inalienable right pertaining either to the righteous or the wicked. It is the recognition of a plain fact, and not the formulation of a theological principle. The prayers of the righteous do sometimes avail to shield the wicked from destruction; for example, Jehovah spares Israel for

the sake of Moses and in response to his plea for his people (Num. 21:7–9).

Another specific case to which special attention must be called is that of Jonathan, the son of Saul (I Sam., chap. 14). Saul, in the day of battle against the Philistines, had laid Israel under oath to abstain from food till the evening. Jonathan, who had wrought a great victory for Israel, unwittingly violated that oath. Jehovah at once manifested his anger by refusing to respond to Saul's request for an oracle. Upon investigation by lot the offense of Jonathan was discovered and he was condemned to death by his father. But the people protested and "ransomed Jonathan that he died not." Unfortunately we are left in ignorance as to the nature of the ransom. The significant fact, however, is that one who in accordance with all precedents should have been put to death in order to appease the divine anger is allowed to remain alive and no serious results follow. The moral sense of Israel asserts itself and casts off for the moment the chains of religious custom. What the compensation to the outraged deity was or whether there was any, the record does not say.

The story of the return of the ark by the Phil-

istines (I Sam. 6:1–18) shows clearly what the underlying conception of propitiation was. The word used here to describe the propitiatory offering is *'asham.* The ark must be restored to its own land and with it must be sent an *'asham* of gold. This *'asham,* in the story as it now stands, evidently serves as a gift to Jehovah in compensation for the offense against his majesty. What the original signification of the golden mice, and tumors was, is more or less doubtful;[1] but in the present text they serve only as gifts constituting a reparation to the outraged Jehovah. The incident may legitimately be used as representing the Hebrew point of view, even though the transaction is one ascribed to Philistines; for the interpretation of the transaction is unmistakably Hebrew.

Thus far we have considered cases in which atonement in one form or another was made,

[1] The association of "tumors" and mice (cf. LXX) is somewhat confusing until we recall that the mouse was associated with pestilence in antiquity and that modern science has traced the spread of the bubonic plague to rats. It was probably some such plague from which the Philistines suffered; hence they made images of the "tumors" and of the rodents that propagate the plague, put them all in a box, and sent them out of the country, hoping thereby to banish the pestilence—cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough,* Vol. II, p. 427. Later tradition has seized hold of some such proceeding as this and found therein valuable material for the glorification of Jehovah.

though the technical term for the act of atonement was not employed. It remains to note the few occurrences of this word in this period, and to discuss its significance as revealed by the context and in the light of the facts already considered. The root upon which the word "to atone" is formed (כפר) is common to the main Semitic languages, being found in Arabic, Assyrian, Syriac, and Hebrew. The primitive meaning of the word, which no longer appears in Hebrew, but in Assyrian and Syriac is still plainly discernible, and lies close to the surface in Arabic, was "to wipe out," "obliterate."[1] This primitive meaning underlies the Hebrew usage and at times shines through, but for the most part it has given place to certain derived meanings.

The starting-point for the proper study of the Hebrew usage in this early Old Testament period is the use of the noun *Kŏphĕr* (כֹּפֶר) in Exod. 21:30 (=E). The law here provides

[1] So W. R. Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 2d ed., p. 438; H. Zimmern, *Die Keilinschrifte und das Alte Testament*, 3d ed., p. 601; Gesenius-Buhl, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, 14th ed.; and especially an admirable article on the Hebrew usage of this word by H. P. Smith, *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. X, pp. 412–22. For a contrary view see the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Lexicon* and the references there cited.

that in the case of an ox known to be vicious its owner shall make good the loss of any human life destroyed by the ox, by the forfeit of his own life, or, if the relatives prefer, by the payment of a *Kōphĕr*, i. e., a bloodwit, a ransom. This bloodwit is defined by the context itself as the "redemption of his life." This is ostensibly a purely human transaction; but evidence is not lacking that the whole proceeding was under divine auspices and that failure to comply with the requirements of the law would have brought down the vengeance of heaven upon the offender. In any case the *Kōphĕr* is a payment required of the ox's owner by those who have a right to demand his life but for financial considerations are willing to commute their demand. The effect of the ransom is the appeasement of the kinsmen's wrath and the consequent escape from death on the part of the guilty. The normal operation of the *lex talionis* is thus diverted from its course by a money payment. The same conception of *Kōphĕr* as a gift of money intended to deflect the natural course of justice appears in its common usage as denoting a "bribe" (e. g., I Sam. 12:3). The thought resident in the word therefore is that of "compensation" rather than "substitution."

The verb "to atone" is unanimously conceded to be a denominative derived from the more original *Kōphĕr;* the same general sense therefore should characterize both. It does certainly satisfactorily represent the verb in I Sam. 3:14, "the guilt of the house of Eli shall not be compensated for by sacrifice or offering forever," which clearly implies that ordinary guilt may be so expiated. In II Sam. 21:3 f. the answer of the Gibeonites to David's question, "Wherewith shall I make compensation?" shows that two kinds of expiation were allowable in such a case (cf. Exod. 21:30), either the bloodwit or the life for life, and that the surviving kinsmen had the right to decide between them. The sequel indicates that the decision was binding both upon God and man; they were alike appeased. Appeasement brought about through gifts by way of compensation for past injuries and offenses is the content of the verb in the only other passage belonging to this period in which it occurs, viz., Gen. 32:21 (=J). Jacob says concerning Esau, "I would appease his face with the present that precedes me, and afterward I would see his face; perhaps he will be gracious to me." The method and the result are thus indisputably clear.

The usage of the word in these three passages then points to appeasement, or propitiation, as the end aimed at in the atoning process, and to the making of a gift, whether voluntary or obligatory as the common method of securing this end. This is in perfect agreement with the testimony concerning the theory of atonement furnished by the actual historical cases already considered; and it is very definitely established by other passages wherein the word כפר does not itself appear, e. g., I Sam. 26:19; II Sam. 24:25; Gen. 8:20–22 (=J), that the sacrificial gift was thought to have great influence in placating the angry Jehovah. But no special form of the propitiatory sacrifice was required. Apparently any ordinary sacrifice might be used for the purpose of making atonement; Noah offered burnt-offerings (Gen. 8:20–22); David, burnt-offerings and peace-offerings (II Sam. 24:25). It remained for later generations to develop an elaborate ritual for the specific purpose of atonement. In addition to this reliance upon sacrifice we have seen that even in preprophetic Israel the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man was thought to avail much in behalf of the guilty. Moreover, the sincere repentance of the trans-

gressor, at least in certain instances, was emphasized as helping to make a sinner acceptable to God.

One phase of the atonement idea still calls for consideration, viz., the theory of propitiation by substitution. Is there any evidence that in this period it was deemed possible to shield the sinner from the anger of Jehovah by the substitution of an innocent victim? The whole gift idea of atonement involves a certain kind of substitution: Jehovah accepts a more or less valuable offering as an evidence of genuine sorrow for guilt, and so is willing to forego his right to vengeance upon the sinner. When the sacrificial act, however, reflected no corresponding change of heart the gift was little more than a bribe, and so the great prophets came to consider it. But the compensation is made by the guilty party and to that extent he does not escape punishment for his sin—it is simply commuted. The passages in which the thought of substitution, in the sense of the exchange of one life for another, may possibly reside are I Sam. 14:43–45; Exod. 34:20; Gen. 22:1–14 (E); II Sam. 21:1–14. In reference to I Sam. 14:43–45 the question must remain open; the narrative furnishes no answer, nor any slightest

hint of the correct solution. Exod. 34:20 (=J) provides for the redemption of the firstborn in Israel. The method of redemption is not indicated. The law of vs. 19, however, applies to men and domestic animals alike. From vs. 20*a* it is clear that the firstborn of cattle was sacrificed to Jehovah; its life belonged to him. The same right is apparently held by Jehovah to the human life.[1] But as the firstborn of the ass, not suitable for sacrifice, is to be redeemed by the substitutionary sacrifice of a lamb, failing which the ass's firstborn must be put to death, so the firstborn son must be redeemed. Here again the means and method of redemption are left indeterminate. Two things only appear from the context: (1) the life of the firstborn on general principles belongs to Jehovah and should be sacrificed to him; (2) Jehovah accepts

[1] That the life of the firstborn was at one time in Israel actually surrendered by death to the deity can scarcely be doubted in view of (1) the wide prevalence of human sacrifice among the western Semites, (2) the revelations of infant sacrifice disclosed by the excavations at Gezer, at Taanach, and at Megiddo (=Tel-Mutesellim), (3) the statements concerning the rebuilding of the town of Jericho (I Kings 16:34), (4) the story of Abraham's temptation to sacrifice Isaac, (5) the manifest meaning of Exod. 13:15. The law of Exod. 34:20 is evidence of the amelioration of this horrible custom by the advance of civilization and by a better understanding of the character of God. Cf. Thompson, *Semitic Magic*, pp. 219–44.

something else as a satisfactory substitute for the surrender of this life. This substitution, of course, has nothing to do with sin; but it is of importance to note its presence within the sphere of religion, and in a matter having direct relation to God. If Jehovah will accept a substitute in one sphere, may he not also in another?

The story of the Gibeonites' vengeance upon the house of Saul (II Sam. 21:1–4) reveals a certain kind of substitution. Saul had wronged the Gibeonites by slaying some of their number in violation of the old covenant of friendship between them and Israel. In so doing he had incurred the wrath of Jehovah, the guardian of justice. The law of blood-revenge called upon the Gibeonites to retaliate against Saul in like manner. But the relative weakness of the Gibeonites rendered this impossible. Time passed and the crime remained unavenged. Jehovah therefore vented his wrath by sending a famine upon Israel. The hanging of Saul's grandsons propitiates Jehovah and satisfies the Gibeonites. Innocent persons here pay with their lives the penalty that should have been paid by the guilty one himself. To estimate aright the significance of this occurrence we must bear in mind the fact of the solidarity

of the ancient Hebrew family. In the administration of primitive justice the unit was the family rather than the individual. For example, in the primitive Semitic custom of blood-revenge the law was satisfied by the slaughter of any member of the murderer's family; it was not necessary to identify and punish the murderer himself. The family was thought of as a social body; to punish any member of it was to punish all members. From this point of view there is no substitution; the family has committed the offense and the family bears the penalty. But it is exceedingly improbable that this primitive solidarity remained in full force at so late a time as that from which this story comes. The individual began to come to his full rights and responsibilities rapidly after the entrance into Canaan with its high plane of civilization and accompanying complexity of life. Complete solidarity is possible only in primitive communities. The civilization of Canaan, however, was centuries old, and Israel proved an apt pupil in the hands of her Canaanitish teachers.[1] The law of blood-

[1] For a study of the development of the consciousness of individual responsibility, see J. M. P. Smith, *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. X (1906), pp. 251–66; cf. M. Löhr. *Sozialismus und Individualismus im Alten Testament* (1906).

revenge itself as administered in the times of David and Solomon shows that particular pains were taken then to wreak the vengeance upon the guilty individual (II Sam. 3:27; 14:7, 11; I Kings 2:5, 31–33). In the case of Saul this was impossible; hence in accordance with the older usage his descendants die in his stead.

This case can be accounted for neither on the gift hypothesis, nor on that of penal substitution. Were it only the most valuable present that was necessary to assuage Jehovah's wrath any group of individuals might have served for the sacrifice. Likewise any individuals might have served as penal substitutes. But the whole point of the incident is in their being grandsons of the guilty man. By them alone can propitiation be made. In a time, however, when the individualistic point of view was rapidly forging to the front, such a procedure would inevitably come to be looked upon as a case of substitution in which the innocent took the place of the guilty. The step from the thought of suffering punishment as a member of the family unit in which each and all are liable to suffer because of the sin of any member to that of the innocent individual suffering definitely and directly on account of the sin of another individual who

thereby escapes punishment is, at the most, a very short one.

The story of Jehovah's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1 ff.), though not concerned at all with the thought of atonement, nevertheless testifies to the prevalence of the idea of substitution. The story takes for granted the possibility that Jehovah might have required a human sacrifice, and so represents Abraham receiving the command in unquestioning obedience. Probably, as Gunkel maintains, it is a tradition connected with the sanctuary at Jehovah-jireh intended to describe the way in which the older custom of the place in accordance with which human sacrifices were offered there gave way at a certain time to the milder, more humane custom of offering sacrificial animals to Jehovah. The substitution of the ram for the boy was entirely acceptable to Jehovah, and has remained so ever since. This again is not *penal* substitution, but simply an example of the general practice in accordance with which Jehovah accepts a substitute for that which he has a right to insist upon, were he so minded.

The facts of the preprophetic period thus seem to show that the main idea regarding

atonement was that of compensation made to Jehovah for the purpose of mitigating the punishment, or, in the case of the infliction of the death-penalty, in order to save the life forfeited by guilt to Jehovah. There is no clear case of penal substitution in this period; that is, of an offender saved from death by the infliction of the penalty upon a guiltless, human substitute. The general idea of substitution, viz., that Jehovah will sometimes forego his right to demand the surrender of a life to him in death and will accept compensation in lieu of it, is unmistakably present.[1] Certain cases, however, seem to imply that nothing less than the death-penalty would have appeased the outraged Jehovah in these particular instances. Involved in some of the records of atoning processes is the more or less clearly implied teaching that the outer act of atonement is but the reflex and symbol of a genuine, heartfelt sorrow for the sin; but events are not lacking to show that sin liable to the death-penalty in this period did not always come within the sphere of volition and consequently was not always of such a character as to render true repentance possible; such stories as those of Jonathan unwittingly

[1] Cf. p. 33.

violating his father's vow and Uzzah slain for steadying the ark show that there was a certain automatic element in the incurring of guilt and infliction of punishment.[1] These two aspects of the doctrine of sin and atonement, the external or mechanical and the ethico-spiritual, abide throughout the history of Hebrew thought.

[1] This wholly unethical conception of sin and guilt was widespread in antiquity; cf. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 4th ed., Vol. II, p. 127; W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2d ed., pp. 400 ff.; R. Campbell Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 ff.

CHAPTER II

ATONEMENT IN THE PROPHETS AND DEUTERONOMY

The great task of prophecy was the transformation of the religion of Israel. To this task it gave itself with unselfish and unremitting zeal and achieved a large measure of success. The glory of the prophets is that they knew where to place the emphasis in religion. They sought to substitute for rites and ceremonies, splendid and sincere as they were, still more splendid ideals and purposes. They would make religion a genuine heart experience, changing and controlling all the currents of life. A passion for justice, truth, and mercy must be far more highly prized than any degree of zeal for sacrifices and institutions. True religion is a right attitude of mind and heart toward God and man. Prophecy moves not in the sphere of the external and mechanical, but in that of the inner and vital. The best formulation of the religious ideal of prophecy is that furnished by the description of the "new covenant" in Jer., chap. 31.

The prophets' teaching concerning atone-

ment runs along different lines from those followed by the preprophetic teaching on the one hand, and the priestly conceptions on the other. The reason for this lies in the prophets' conception of sin. For them sin is an attitude, or an act of the will. There can be no unconscious, "unwitting," or automatic sinning. Sin is not an accident, but a choice. Man wills to be and to do evil rather than good. Therefore sacrifices and offerings in themselves can be of no effect in appeasing God when angry on account of sin. Nothing will serve to assuage the divine wrath save the total abandonment of the evil ways or thoughts that have occasioned the wrath. No gifts can atone to the Lord of the whole earth for violations of his moral and spiritual law. Resolute turning-away from evil is the only thing required; but it is an indispensable prerequisite of pardon and the restoration of divine favor. Repentance precedes forgiveness. A humble and contrite heart is the only recommendation the sinner needs with God.[1] It is precisely the kind of atonement that every right-minded parent desires from a

[1] E. g., Isa. 1:10–20; 6:10; 58:6, 9; Jer. 7:22; 4:14; 14:11 f.; chap. 18; 26:13; 36:3; Mic. 6:6–8; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:14 f., 25 f.; Ezek. 36:26 ff.

wayward child—a genuine repentance, including sorrow for past offenses and determination henceforth to exhibit filial obedience and love.

The prophets' idea of atonement was too lofty, too simple, too penetrating for the mass of their contemporaries. The almost unbroken succession of calamities that befell Israel in the prophetic period did but confirm the people in the error of their ways. They sought to propitiate the angry Jehovah by loading him down with offerings. They tried to buy his favor. They failed absolutely to appreciate the prophets' insistence upon right character as the only acceptable thing in the eyes of Jehovah. Driven to desperation by their failure to reach the heart of God, they at length agonizingly sought to placate his obduracy by offering him their most precious treasures, their own children. The dark days immediately preceding the fall of Jerusalem saw this type of religion put forth its mightiest efforts, only to give place in the case of many of its adherents to doubt, apostasy, and idolatry (Mic. 6:68; II Kings, chap. 21; Jer. 44:15–19; Ezek. 8:7–18; chap. 22). Over against this whole commercial aspect of religion in general and of atonement in particu-

lar, and engaged in a life-and-death struggle with it for supremacy, the teaching of the prophets concerning sin and forgiveness stands out glorious in its purity of motive, simplicity of conception, clearness of vision, and depth of insight into the character of God.

Indications are not wholly lacking that some of the prophets, at least, believed man unable to make himself acceptable before God. Not only are forgiveness and pardon the prerogatives of God, but the prerequisite of their bestowal must likewise be besought of God. It is God who cleanses the heart and life by purging away the dross (Isa. 1:25; 6:7; Jer. 31:31–34; 33:8). But the prophets never pushed this idea to the point of eliminating the human element entirely from the transaction, as some theologians have done. They conserved the dynamic of their preaching by insisting upon an attitude of repentance of evil and longing for good. God so transforms the life that these longings become attainments.

A great advance step in the history of the ideas of sin and atonement was taken by the prophets when they succeeded in placing the responsibility and penalty for sin where they belonged, viz., upon the sinner himself. This

was a part of the great movement away from family and clan solidarity toward individualism.[1] The popular proverb current in the exilic period, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. 31·29; Ezek. 18:2) shows that the doctrine therein stated was still believed but that it was held by many to be an unjust principle of action for the Deity to employ. But yet, certain prophetic teachers did not hesitate to uphold it (Jer. 32:18) and to declare that the fall of Jerusalem was due to the sins of Manasseh and his contemporaries (II Kings 23:26 f.; 24:23 f.; Jer. 15:4). In like manner, they held that the righteousness of one might apply on the account of another (Jer. 5:1; 15:1; Deut. 10:10). Ezekiel, however, denies the possibility of vicarious righteousness (Ezek. 14:12 ff.) and declares emphatically "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 19, 20). Each man's sin recoils upon his own head and each man's righteousness inures to his own benefit, and not to that of any other, even his own child. With Ezekiel religion is a private, personal experience wrought out in the soul of each individual. Consequently, every man stands or falls before

[1] See p. 20, note 1.

God upon his own merits. Ezekiel, therefore, has but worked out the prophetic teaching to its inevitable conclusion. Sin angers God and is thus doomed to punishment; God's anger may be assuaged only by repentance; this repentance must be experienced by the sinner himself; there is no other way of salvation. Ezekiel's teaching on this point is, of course, open to the criticism that he takes no account of the fact that "no man liveth to himself," but each is involved in the life of all. We cannot isolate ourselves if we would. It must be remembered, however, that the prophet in this connection is thinking only of man's responsibility to God and of God's judgment of man.

Here we must turn aside for a moment, and, by way of contrast, note the conceptions of atonement appearing in the Book of Deuteronomy. This is a body of law set in a prophetic background. It is with the legal element that we are now chiefly concerned; for it is in this element alone that there is any marked variance from the teachings of the prophets. The Deuteronomic form of the Decalogue continues the earlier teaching that children suffer at the hands of Jehovah for the sins of their parents

(Deut. 5:9). But in another section of the law this old conception is repudiated in the plainest terms (Deut. 24:16), and the law moves over to the platform of Ezekiel. The conflict between these two formulations of the law cannot be removed by saying that the latter is applicable to the administration of human law, while the former applies only to the divine execution of justice. For it can scarcely be maintained that the law would deliberately represent Jehovah as acting in accordance with less lofty and just standards than those that control the actions of men; nor does such an attempt at harmonization take sufficient account of the fact that the very law that applies to the administration of human justice is represented as a divinely ordained law. The whole law is of God. The only hypothesis that satisfactorily explains the conflict in this particular case is that of a considerable lapse of time between the promulgation of the two laws, during which man's sociological and religious ideas had been undergoing a thorough revision; or that of the origin of the Deuteronomic Code from different sources finally brought together, but not completely harmonized.

A Deuteronomic passage of especial interest

is the section of the law which provides for the atonement to be made in case a man is found murdered and the identity of the murderer is not discovered (21:1–9). This law is without parallel elsewhere in the Old Testament, and is undoubtedly a survival of an old custom. The elders of the city nearest to the scene of the murder are to take an unbroken heifer, slay her on the bank of a perennial stream, wash their hands over her body and take oath that they have had no knowledge of or share in the crime. Only thus can they clear themselves and their city from responsibility for the guilt. The old feeling of the community's responsibility for blood shed in its vicinity is here represented. The whole proceeding is clearly religious, and, though not regarded as a sacrifice proper by the Deuteronomic legislators, it is quite generally conceded to have been a sacrificial rite in some earlier stage of the religion of Israel. Its religious character appears in the specifications concerning the heifer, which are the same as those for a sacrificial animal, in the character of the place chosen for the performance of the rite, in the presence of the priests, and in the final appeal to Jehovah for pardon. The heifer evidently is a substitute for the un-

known murderer and bears the penalty that properly belonged to him.[1]

The substitutionary sacrifice was certainly the essence of the transaction in its earliest form, which fact testifies to the existence of the idea of substitution in early Israel and helps to interpret some of the hints in this direction noted in the customs of the preprophetic period. But in the Deuteronomic version of the custom, the emphasis is not upon the slaughter of the animal so much as it is upon the state of mind of the elders, their attitude toward the crime and toward Jehovah. The slaughter is necessary, indeed, but it serves largely as demonstrating the sincerity of the elders' protestations of innocence and pleas for mercy. The substitutionary function of the slaughter is reaffirmed, but it is supplemented by the prophetic requirement of clean hands and a pure heart. A primitive, legalistic, non-ethical element in the law is the conviction that the spilling of human blood must be avenged and atoned for, even if the guilty person cannot be found, lest

[1] So also Dillmann, Driver, Steuernagel, and Bertholet *in loc.;* Köberle, *Sünde und Gnade,* p. 83; Herrmann, *Die Idee der Sühne im Alten Testament,* pp. 47 f., 54 f.; Smend, *Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte,* 2d ed., p. 144; Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments,* p. 204; Bennewitz, *Die Sünde im Alten Israel,* p. 253.

divine wrath rest upon the land. The same feeling about blood is attested by Deut. 19:13 and 22:8.

Reverting once more to the prophetic teachings concerning atonement, we are confronted by that most famous of all prophecies, Isa. 52:13—53:12. This is a narrative of the bitter experiences of the Servant of Jehovah with a prediction of his coming glorification. The purpose of the passage is to explain the sufferings of the Servant, and it does this by showing their vital relation to the successful accomplishment of his mission. Apart from them he could have accomplished nothing; "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone." The Servant here described is the people of Israel,[1] the nation as a whole and not any part of it, nor any individual member of it. It is the nation idealized, to be sure, a nation so transformed and spiritualized in the process of interpretation as to be almost unrecognizable to those not gifted with the same degree of prophetic

[1] So also Budde, *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. III, pp. 499 ff.; Giesebrecht, *Der Knecht Jahves des Deuterojesaja* (1902); Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments* (1905), pp. 307 f.; Smend, *Lehrbuch der Alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte*, 2d ed. (1899), pp. 355 f.; Marti, *Jesaia* (1906); Köberle, *Sünde und Gnade im religiösen Leben des Volkes Israel bis auf Christum* (1905), pp. 240 ff.

imagination as our prophet. It is an idealization, however, the same in kind and no greater in degree, than that which meets us on every hand in the prophetic interpretation of Israel's past and portrayal of the future.

The purpose of the prophecy is not to explain how atonement is wrought out for sinners, but rather why the innocent suffer, and how this suffering, which is but for a moment, will work out a far more exceeding and abiding weight of glory for the sufferer. The reason for the suffering is found, not in the sins of Israel, but in those of the heathen nations. The penalty due their sins has been borne by Israel. He has suffered in their place. No thought appears so frequently in the passage as this of the righteous Servant's substitution for the wicked (vss. 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12). The thought is that of vicarious satisfaction of the demands made by the divine righteousness. For the Hebrews the character of God made it necessary that he should punish sin. This punishment came in the way of earthly disasters and calamities. If suffering came to nation or individual, it constituted indisputable evidence of sin. But the Servant suffers, and yet he is innocent. His suffering, then, must be vicarious; he is bearing

the penalty of others' sins, he has been constituted an *'āshām*, a compensation, a ransom for the guilty (vs. 10). In obedience to the divine law that sin must be punished he has "poured out his soul unto death." He has voluntarily submitted himself to the extreme penalty and has uncomplainingly borne witness to the justice of the divine law. The guilty, too, may have suffered, but it is this voluntary suffering of the righteous in behalf of the unrighteous that alone satisfies the demand of Jehovah and saves the guilty from the extreme penalty of the law.

The teaching of this truth, however, was not an end in itself with our prophet. He does not stop here. This is only a stage in his journey. The greater lesson he has to convey is that this vicarious suffering on the part of the Servant has redemptive power; "by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous Servant make many righteous." His experience serves as an object-lesson setting forth to the nations of the world the character of the righteous God and the depths of their own iniquity. It awakens in them amazement and repentance. It stirs the depths of their being and leads them to acknowledge their sins and accept the "healing" rend-

ered accessible to them through his sufferings. Furthermore, because of his submissive acceptance of the burden and penalty of the world's sin, the Servant is to be exalted. The justice of Jehovah will not suffer such a one to end his days prematurely and in disgrace. He is to be raised from the dead and given a position of power in the world. His latter end will be glorious. It is this message of hope and encouragement that was the prophet's burden. He sought to cheer suffering Israel by showing the larger meaning of the exilic experiences and revealing their vital import in bringing the world to a knowledge of the true God. In this converted world shall Israel find his true place and reap the full reward of his labors. His sufferings are not to be taken as indicative of Jehovah's punitive wrath against him, but rather as the way chosen by God to exalt him in the sight of the world and to reconcile the world unto Himself. The doctrine of vicarious suffering, prominent as it is, is thus only the basis for an expression of assurance of Israel's worldwide mission.[1] It is to be noted that the

[1] Important as this attempt to solve the problem of suffering was, it remained without appreciable influence upon the discussion of the problem until after the close of the Old Testament period. It is not again employed or alluded to until IV Macc. 1:11; 6:29; 17:21 f.

redemptive efficacy of the Servant's mission does not lie in his sufferings alone, but that his resurrection and glorification are needed to complete the work. It is not until the Servant has been "exalted and lifted up" that the true significance of the sufferings becomes apparent to the astonished world.

In leaving this division of the subject, attention must be called to the few occurrences of the word כפר "to atone," in the Deuteronomic and prophetic literature, not including Ezek., chaps. 40–48, which will be considered in connection with the later legal literature. In the story of Aaron's calf, Exod. 32:30 ff. (= a late addition to E), Moses returns to the presence of Jehovah expressing the hope that he might perhaps appease his anger aroused by Israel's sin. The idea of the verb is here evidently "make propitiation or appeasement;" the means whereby it is to be accomplished is the prayer and supplication of one especially close to God; forgiveness is besought as a special favor granted for Moses' sake. The intensity of Moses' desire for his people's pardon is evidenced by his plea that he himself be blotted out of the book of Jehovah if forgiveness be not granted. It is forcing the language to find here,

as some have done,[1] a proposal on Moses' part to surrender his own life as a substitute for that of the people. This idea of appeasement was found to be resident in the word as used in the preprophetic period. (See pp. 14–16.)

A second meaning in which "atone" is employed in this literature is that of purifying the sinner or purging away his sin. The agent of the purification or purging in all these cases is Jehovah himself (Ezek. 16:63; Isa. 6:7; 22:14; Jer. 18:23; Deut. 21:8), and he does it of his own free grace. Certain conditions may be required, of course, as in Isa. 27:9 and Deut. 21:1–9, but the actual purification is Jehovah's work. This usage of the word lies very near to the primitive meaning, "wipe out," "obliterate;" how near may be judged upon reference to Jer. 18:23, where the verb to "atone" is parallel to the verb "wipe out," "blot out" (מָחָה).

In Isa. 28:18, as the text now stands, the verb "atone" is applied to the breaking of a covenant, and must have its primitive force—"your covenant with death shall be wiped

[1] E. g., Holzinger, *Exodus, in loc.* In any case, even if the thought of substitution does lie in the words attributed to Moses, the futility of substitution is distinctly asserted in Jehovah's answer (vs. 33).

out," i. e., annulled; but the text is, perhaps, corrupt.

The only other occurrence of the word is in Isa. 47:11, "there shall befall thee disaster, which thou shalt be unable to avert by ransom." The ordinary renderings here, "propitiate," "expiate," are unsuitable; one does not propitiate a disaster, but a person; nor does one expiate a calamity, but rather a sin. The meaning "avert by ransom" becomes practically certain if in the parallel line the difficult שׁחרהּ be corrected to שׁחדהּ, i. e., "avert by bribe."[1] This meaning of כִּפֶּר is derived immediately from the noun כֹּפֶר, "ransom," "blood-wit."

The new phases of the atonement idea presented in the Deuteronomic and prophetic literature thus seem to be: (1) the emphasis upon repentance as the *sine qua non* of pardon; (2) the teaching that it is Jehovah only who can purify the guilty; (3) the declaration that each man's fate is in his own hands; his sins can be borne by no other; (4) the unmistakable acceptance of the idea of penal substitution in Isa., chap. 53; and (5) the new teaching of the re-

[1] So Marti, Krochmal, Graetz, Cheyne, *in loc.;* and the lexicons of Gesenius-Buhl, and Brown-Driver-Briggs.

demptive and regenerative power of the sufferings of the innocent in the hearts of the guilty. There is, thus, no carefully wrought-out system of thought upon this subject, nor were pains taken by the prophetic teachers to bring their utterances into harmony with those of their predecessors and contemporaries. They hesitated not to strike out new paths. The religious opinions of the past were not a burden or a constraint upon their own thoughts, but a stimulus to better thinking. The problems of life received varying solutions then as now. The prophetic soul enjoyed full liberty, and theological consistency was lost sight of in the passion for truth.

CHAPTER III

ATONEMENT IN THE LATER PRIESTLY LITERATURE

The adoption of the Priestly Code in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah marked an epoch in the history of the Hebrew religion. It signalized the triumph of the legalistic, priestly aspect of religious thought. Prophecy had emphasized the value of the ethical element, and of man's right relations to his fellows, as indispensable to his acceptance with God; legislation lays its stress upon the distinctively religious element, and upon the necessity of man's right attitude toward God himself. It seeks to secure the desired attitude by providing a series of regulations which shall control all the activities of life on their Godward side. It furnishes a rule, or ritual for the performance of every religious function, and it recognizes the religious element present in practically every human act or experience. The inevitable result was a transfer of emphasis from character to act, from being to doing, with the accompanying danger of externalism and formalism in religion. Nevertheless, the whole movement

grew out of and attempted to give utterance to two great thoughts, viz., the immeasurable holiness of God, and the enormity and universality of sin. These two truths were driven deep into the consciousness of Israel's religious thinkers by the fall of Jerusalem and the agonies of exile, drastic penalties inflicted by a most holy God upon a desperately wicked people. The task of atonement is now greater than ever before; God and man are at the farthest poles of estrangement. None but the most rigid, exact, minute, and comprehensive provisions for atonement will secure the desired forgiveness and restoration to favor.

The chief literature expressive of this feeling is Ezek., chaps. 40–48, the Priestly Code, the P document, and the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. This does not comprise the total literary output of the exilic and post-exilic age, but it represents the predominant spirit of the age which breathes through almost all of its literature, e.g., the later prophets, many psalms, and even some of the Wisdom Literature.

In the study of the atonement ritual an initial fact of great significance presents itself; sin is no longer primarily the product of the will.

It may be and frequently is existent entirely apart from any act of volition; "unwitting sins" play a large part in the law, for they require atonement no less than deliberate sins.[1] Not only so, but even certain inanimate objects are under the necessity of being made acceptable to God through atonement. Certain inevitable, natural processes also involve the necessity of atonement. The truth of these statements appears from such regulations as those concerning childbirth (Lev. 12:6–8), where instead of

[1] It is not to be supposed that this phase of the conception of sin appeared for the first time in exilic and post-exilic times. It is rather a survival of earlier beliefs, which were ignored, if not opposed by the prophets, but were always a part of the popular consciousness and held their place uninterruptedly in the ritual. This sort of material constitutes strong proof for the antiquity of much of the contents of the Priestly Code. In this connection attention may be called to the theory of Thompson, *Semitic Magic*, pp. 193 ff., to the effect that "the 'unwitting' sins of Leviticus were always followed by some physical manifestation in the unlucky man; or inversely, sickness was held to be the result of an 'unwitting' breach of tabu, which demanded an 'atonement' to free the sick man from the demon he had attracted." This hypothesis may have applied in early times to some phases of "unwitting" sin, such as leprosy (Lev., chap. 14; see below p. 49). But it fails to cover the ground. The case of Jonathan, for example, in I Sam. 14:24 ff. is a clear case of "unwitting" sin, though the term is not applied to it in the context. But Jonathan evidently sinned without knowing it, and this is the whole of "unwitting" sin. Yet he neither experiences any "physical manifestation" in his own person nor observes any in the persons of his countrymen. Nor is there any room for demoniac activity in

something calling forth divine displeasure, there seems to be rather a gracious manifestation of divine favor; those concerning the person who has accidentally come in contact with a corpse (Num., chap. 19); those providing for the propitiation to be made in behalf of the altar (Ezek. 43:19–27; Exod. 29:36 f.); and those dealing with "unwitting sins" (Lev., chaps. 4, 5). Such matters as these do not constitute sin in the Christian sense of the word at all, yet the necessity for atonement is imper-

the case. Again, Lev. 4:3 makes provision for cases of "unwitting" sin on the part of the "anointed priest" which "bring guilt on the people." There can be no question of the priest's sickness here, for this would not inform him that he had involved the *people* in guilt; nor can it well be a case of national plague, for this would in no way imply that the cause was to be sought in *priestly* sin. Similarly, when the "unwitting" sin is that of the congregation as a whole (e.g., Lev. 4:13 ff.), neither the language employed nor the method of procedure prescribed seems appropriate to a case of national pestilence. Furthermore, the phrase, "if his sin, wherewith he hath sinned, be made known to him" (Lev. 4:23, 28), rather points to other channels of information than that of sickness. In short, it seems that Mr. Thompson seeks to make his hypothesis carry more than it will bear, and that he has brought over into the Old Testament from his indispensable studies in Babylonian demonology (see his *Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia;* and his *Reports of the Astronomers and Magicians of Nineveh and Babylon*) a prepossession in favor of the activity of evil spirits which is not supported by the facts. One of the marked differences between Babylonian and Hebrew religion is the relatively slight recognition of demons in the latter; cf. Hans Duhm, *Die bösen Geister im Alten Testament* (1904).

ative; failure to provide it means death (Lev. 15:31).

In general we may say that atonement is called for by three classes of offenses: (*a*) cases of uncleanness where atonement serves for general purificatory purposes, making the person or thing acceptable in the divine presence;[1] (*b*) "unwitting sins," i. e., unintentional or accidental transgressions;[2] (*c*) deliberate, intentional sins. This third category is excluded by some from the list of sins for which atonement may be made.[3] This limitation of the efficacy of atonement to cases of unwitting sin either against moral or ceremonial law is supported by Num. 15:30 ff., which expressly declares that for sins committed "with a high hand" there can be no atonement. This general principle is in accord with a number of specific laws decreeing the death or excommunication of persons guilty of such offenses as incest, witchcraft, adultery, blasphemy, murder, disregard of the Sabbath, and various violations

[1] E. g., Exod. 29:1 ff., 36 f.; Lev. 8:14 f.; 9:1 ff., chaps. 12, 14, 15; Num. 6:9 ff.; chaps. 7, 19, 28, and 29.

[2] E. g., Num. 15:22–29; Lev. 4:1—5:19.

[3] So Schultz, *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. IV, p. 297; Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Vol. I, p. 164.

of the ritual.[1] But over against this general law and its many concrete illustrations, there are several cases of a contrary character which none but the most sophistical methods of interpretation can convert into unwitting sins. For example, atonement is available for perjury, betrayal of trust, robbery, oppression, sexual intercourse with another man's bondmaid, and murmuring against Jehovah's representatives.[2]

How shall we account for these conflicting views? It must be borne in mind that the Priestly Code is a compilation from various sources and represents generations of ritualistic usage and theory. The point of view controlling the most of this material is that only unintentional sins are open to atonement; but not all of it has been brought into harmony with the dominant view. Furthermore, it is not improbable that the exclusion of deliberate sins from

[1] Gen. 17:14; Exod. 12:15, 19; 30:33, 38; 31:14, 15; 32:33 ff.; 35:2; Lev. 7:20 f., 25–27; 10:1 ff.; 17:4, 9, 10; 18:29; 19:8; 20:2, 6, 9–12, 27; 22:3; 23:29 f.; 24:15–17, 21; Num. 9:13; 15:32; 19:20; 35:31–34.

[2] Lev. 5:1; 6:1–7; 19:20 ff.; Num. 16:41 ff. In Num. 5:6 ff. and Lev. 16:21 f., all sins seem to be provided for, but possibly unwitting sins only were in mind, and in Lev., chap. 16, the sins of the community as a whole rather than those of individuals are certainly intended.

the possibility of atonement was an ideal of the earlier strata of the Priestly Code which was found to be impracticable; time showed it to be impossible of realization. The later revision of the statutes therefore made a concession at this point to human weakness.[1]

The purpose of the atoning act, in the Priestly Code as elsewhere, is to facilitate communion with God, to remove obstacles to such communion of whatever sort they may be. The efficacy of the transaction lies in the performance of the atoning act; that is the *sine qua non*. In certain cases confession of sin accompanied the act (e. g., Lev.16:21). But in many others where atonement was called for there was nothing to confess; the act was all in all. While there was this insistence upon the performance of the rite, there went along with it a practically complete tolerance as to beliefs concerning the rite. This is characteristic of all ancient rites; provided a man discharge his ritual obligations, he is at liberty to interpret them according to his own pleasure.[2] Furthermore, sacrificial

[1] As a matter of fact Lev. 6:1–7; 19:21 f.; and Num. 5:5–8 are quite generally assigned to the latest accretions to the Priestly Code for reasons quite apart from their position with reference to deliberate and inadvertent sins.

[2] See W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2d ed., pp. 16 ff.

rites are a growth, not an invention. They go on from generation to generation and gather to themselves new meaning with the progress of time. So that, to a sacrificial institution dating its origin far back in the past, we need not be surprised to find more than one explanation attached.

This is certainly true of the rite of atonement. One value assigned to the rite is evidently that of a purging agency. It purifies persons and things from uncleanness and sin. Blood plays a large part in this ritual. The person or thing to be cleansed is anointed or sprinkled with blood and this act removes all impurity as if by magic. An illustration of this is furnished by the ritual for the cleansing of lepers (Lev. chap. 14).[1] The leper is already healed of his disease before application is made for ceremonial cleansing. The purpose of the atonement therefore is not to placate the wrath of God in order that the leper may be healed, but rather to remove from him all traces of the uncleanness of his leprosy, which was conceived of originally, in all probability, as due to the malevolence of a demon. This cleansing func-

[1] Similar cases are to be found in Lev. 8:23, 30; 12:6–8; 14:48 ff.; Exod. 29:12, 20, 21.

tion of blood belongs in the same category with that of the lustral water for the purpose of removing uncleanness due to contact with a dead body (Num. 19:11 f.), the burning and washing necessary after participation in war (Num. 31:21–24), the incense burned by Aaron in order to turn aside the plague which was devastating Israel (Num. 16:46 ff.), and the sacred oil used in the consecration of priests (Lev. 8:12). This conception of the efficacy of blood goes back to ancient usages and ideas, which have persisted among the Arabs even to the present day. The Bedouin sprinkles blood when he digs a well, erects a building, or tills new land, and believes that by so doing he protects himself from the activities of hostile demons.[1] Blood was one of those substances which traditionally had power to remove persons or things from the sphere of the profane to that of the sacred. An animal having been set apart to Jehovah, its blood was holy and was able to impart the quality of holiness to that with which it came in contact.[2]

This conception of the cleansing or sanctifying power of blood applies in all cases in which

[1] Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, Vol. I, pp. 136, 452.

[2] So H. P. Smith, *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. X, p. 419.

the blood is actually applied to the person or object which is to be made clean or holy. There are many cases of atonement, however, in which no such physical contact between the sinner and the blood is required.[1] For such, some other explanation must be sought, and the clue to it seems to be furnished by the fact that fat and blood are so commonly associated in the sacrificial ritual. Now fat is well known to have been regarded as the best part of the animal in the Semitic world. The best of the fruit is called its fat in the Old Testament itself (Num. 18:12). The crime of Eli's sons was probably that of taking the fat which, as the best part of the offering, belonged to Jehovah. Fat and blood are described as Jehovah's food in Ezek. 44:7. Blood thus seems to have been held in equally high esteem with fat as an article of food.[2] The use of blood and fat accordingly points back to early times when the sacrifice was regarded as a family meal of which the deity

[1] It is very probable that in earlier stages of the ritual blood was applied to all persons seeking atonement just as it was to things, and that the same idea of purifying held good in all cases (cf. Exod. 24:8; 29–20; Lev. 8:23 ff.).

[2] For evidence of this custom among the Semites and other primitive peoples, see W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2d ed., pp. 234; cf. Ps. 50:13.

and his worshipers alike partook and thus cemented the fellowship between them. But it is impossible to suppose that this crude, sensuous conception was present in the mind of the exilic or post-exilic legislator. It is more probable either that he accepted long-cherished customs without understanding or seeking to understand their true significance, or that he regarded the sacrificial blood and fat in many cases as a gift to God. It is scarcely credible, however, that the priestly revisers of the ritual assumed so unquestioning an attitude as the former alternative implies; and certain positive facts favor the latter alternative. The eating of the sin-offering is not permitted to the offerer but is confined to the priests, the representatives of God. In the early stages of the Hebrew ritual, sacrifice was certainly looked upon as a gift to God. In the Priestly Code itself sacrifice is constantly represented as a gift; even the sin-offering is so designated (Lev. 4:23, 28, 32; 5:11). The fact that the Nazirite must offer a sin-offering at the close of his Nazirate is explicable on the gift basis, i. e., now that the Nazirite is about to withdraw from his close, undivided attachment to Jehovah, he propitiates him with liberal gifts lest he be incensed by

such abandonment of him (Num., chap. 6).[1] The substitution of fine flour for an animal in the case of the sin-offering of a poor man likewise points toward the gift hypothesis (Lev. 5:11 ff.).

In any case, the interpretation of the sin-offering and the trespass-offering as representative of atonement through vicarious satisfaction of the divine demand for justice cannot stand. The death of the sacrificial animal does not represent the death of the sinner. The sin is not transferred to the slain victim. The impossibility of the theory of vicarious satisfaction appears from several facts. As previously noted, fine flour may constitute a sin-offering (Lev. 5:11 ff.); there can be in such a case no vicarious death for sin. Not only so, but this

[1] Hubert and Mauss, *op. cit.*, pp. 78 f., explain the ceremony and sacrifice connected with the expiration of the Nazirite's vow as intended to release him from the sanctity his Nazirate conferred upon him so that return to profane life would be possible and safe for him. The ceremony of release as described in the Talmudic treatise *Nazir* requires him to take a bath of purification; offer a burnt offering, sin-offering, and peace-offering; cut off his hair and cast it into the sacrificial flames; and to receive into his hands the heave-offering and the wave-offering with a portion of the accompanying food-offering, which offerings are then presented to Jehovah. He is then released from his sanctity; it has passed to the altar through the hair and the victims that have ascended upon the altar.

flour and the flesh of the sin-offering and trespass-offering were most holy, so that only priests might eat of it, and that too under restrictions (Lev. 5:13; 6:24 f.; 7:6). This is scarcely consistent with the view that the sin has been transferred to the slain animal.[1] Then, too, the emphasis of the ritual is not upon the slaughter, as would be the case if the death of the sinner were the end in view, but rather upon the sprinkling of the blood upon the altar.[2]

[1] The fact that in certain cases the flesh of the sin-offering is not eaten by the priests but is burned "without the camp" (Exod. 29:14; Lev. 4:11 f., 21; 16:27) is not inconsistent with the view that the flesh was holy. The cases in question are the sin-offerings for the high-priest, the priests, or the community as a whole. The priests would scarcely be expected to eat offerings made to God in their own behalf. There was evidently difference of opinion as to the propriety of the priests eating of the sin-offering of the community of which he himself was a part (Lev. 4:21; 10:16 ff.), but such an offering is specifically declared to be "most holy" (Lev. 10:17). The holiness of these offerings appears likewise from the emphasis laid upon the necessity of sprinkling their blood upon the altar for purifying purposes, and from the fact that the flesh was to be burned in a "clean place." The burning outside of the camp was merely an additional precaution against the danger of anyone coming in contact with the most holy flesh (cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2d ed., pp. 371 ff.).

[2] Cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 2nd ed., pp. 32 ff. 337 ff., 344 f. The sprinkling of the blood is the last relic of the original custom of eating the raw flesh of the victim, immediately after its slaughter, in the sacrificial meal wherein the deity also participates. Thereby communion of the deity with his worshipers is established. When men abandon the eating of raw flesh, the

Furthermore, animals were slain for other sacrificial offerings where the purpose was not to make atonement for sin;[1] hence the death of the sacrificial animal is evidently consonant with other interpretations than that of vicarious satisfaction. Finally, certain offenses were beyond the possibility of atonement; nothing but the sinner's death would suffice (Exod. 35:2; Lev. 20:9–16, 27; 24:16 f., 21; Num. 15:32–36). It is quite clear, therefore, that the death of the animal was not regarded as the equivalent of the death of the sinner.

What is the significance of the laying-on of hands in the atonement ritual? Some have urged the substitutionary hypothesis as furnishing the only solution: the sinner lays his hands upon the head of the victim and thereby imparts his own guilt to the animal which dies in his place. It appears, however, that outside of the cultus the laying-on of hands often signifies

drinking of the blood still remains (cf. the prohibitions of this custom in Lev. 7:26 f.; 3:17; 17:10–12); but only to give place in its turn to the smearing or sprinkling of blood upon the person (Exod. 24:6,8; Lev. 8:23; 14:6,14). Finally, the blood is all poured out before the deity as his share or sprinkled upon the altar, while the sacrificers and priests content themselves with the eating of the cooked flesh (Exod. 29:12; Lev. 4:7, 18; 17:13).

[1] See e. g., Lev., chap. 3.

the impartation of good gifts but never the transmission of evil.[1] Furthermore in the non-sacrificial laws the laying-on of hands at times designates something other than transmission or impartation; e. g., in the case of one accused of blasphemy, the witnesses lay their hands upon his head, probably for the purpose of solemnly identifying the offender, or of vouching for the truthfulness of their testimony, but certainly not in order to transmit to him any guilt that attaches to them, for by hypothesis he is already guilty and they innocent (Lev. 24:10 ff.). The only case in the cultus in which there is clearly *transmissio culpae* through the laying-on of hands is that of the goat sent away to Azazel (Lev. 16:21); but this animal is not slaughtered in sacrifice, nor was its blood sprinkled upon the altar. There is thus no parallel here to the atoning sacrifice. The goat is merely the means by which the iniquity is carried away from Israel's land and

[1] The best discussion of this subject is that by Matthes, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 97 ff. the results of which are here stated. Hubert and Mauss (*op. cit.*, pp. 44 f.) present a different hypothesis, namely, that the laying-on of hands identifies the personalities of the offerer and the victim, so that the latter becomes a representative of the former, or, rather, the personalities of the two are fused. In the death of the victim, the offerer himself dies.

so does but discharge the same function as the ephah of the vision in Zech. 5:5–10.[1] Hence in the sacrificial ritual there is, a priori, an alternative explanation open to us; we are not shut up to the hypothesis of transmission of guilt. But this latter hypothesis is out of the question in the case of certain sacrifices in which the laying-on of hands constitutes a part of the ceremony, though they have no relation to the function of atonement, e. g., the peace-offering and the burnt-offering (Lev. 1:4; 3:2). These sacrifices are distinctly gifts to the Deity, and the laying-on of hands seems to have been the sacrificer's method of presenting his gift, the way in which he designates it as coming from him. This view is supported by the fact that modern Semites lay their hands upon the head of the sacrificial victim only when it is slaughtered by someone other than the offerer himself.[2] The sin-offering, however, is also a gift (Lev. 4:23), and so open to the same interpretation of the laying-on of hands. That there was actual or symbolical transference of guilt to the sacrifice seems ruled out moreover by the

[1] For other examples of this widespread practice of expelling sin see J. G. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, Vol. III, pp. 14 ff.

[2] See Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion To-Day*, p. 196.

simple fact that the animal was thereafter sacrificed to God and its flesh was "most holy."

A subsidiary question in this connection is the significance of the representation of the Priestly Code that the Levites were demanded by Jehovah in lieu of the firstborn who rightfully belong to him (Exod. 13:2; Num. 3:12 f., 41; 8:16–18; 18:15). This claim to the firstborn is based upon the deliverance from Egypt and from the slaughter that annihilated the firstborn of Egypt. What the historical antecedents of this theory concerning the Levites were it is impossible to say, but the view of P is perfectly simple: The Levites are a gift to God in substitution for the firstborn of Israel upon whom Jehovah has the same claim as he has upon the first-fruits and firstlings.[1] It is a vicarious offering certainly; but it is not penal substitution for there is no question of guilt here, nor is there any thought of death in the law, whatever there may have been at some remote period in the past. The life-service of the Levites is dedicated to Jehovah as a gift in compensation for the life-service of the firstborn (cf. the case of the dedication of Samuel to the service of Jehovah in the temple at Shiloh).

[1] See p. 18, note.

A similar conception underlies the poll-tax levied upon all male Israelites over twenty years of age whenever the census was taken (Exod. 30:11 ff.). This is declared to be "atonement money" (or ransom) to make atonement for their lives, that there might be no plague among them. A census was an occasion fraught with danger—witness the plague that followed David's census; to forestall an outbreak each male must appease the Deity with an offering (Exod. 30:13 f.).

Thus the atoning sacrifices of the Priestly Code can all be explained as acting in one or the other of two ways, serving either as cleansing agencies which render unclean persons or things clean, or as gifts to Jehovah which assure him of the sinner's sorrow and desire for pardon. The gift of course was not looked upon by the legislators as being of any value in itself to Jehovah, but only as representative of the offender's attitude of mind and heart. From this point of view it is difficult to understand the objection sometimes urged against this interpretation, viz., that the conception of God was so exalted and spiritual during this period that any thought of offering him gifts must have been impossible.[1]

[1] So, e. g., W. P. Paterson, article "Sacrifice," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible.*

Gifts are still offered to God with more or less directness even by the civilization of the twentieth century. It must not be forgotten, however, that for the great body of worshipers the ritual was the all-absorbing thing and that the theology out of which it grew was in all probability confined to a relatively small number of people. The exact performance of the entire ceremony was the essential thing; it is not likely that one part of the sacrificial rite was considered to have any more efficacy than another; the entire rite was necessary to secure the desired atonement. Not only was this so in the case of any particular sacrifice, but the later priestly cultus as a whole came to be looked upon as possessed of atoning value. The purpose of it all was to propitiate Jehovah, who had shown himself capable of such awful wrath. Lest further outbreaks of his anger occur, the most minute care is taken to guard every detail of life, both sacred and profane, so zealously that there shall be no possibility of offending his divine majesty beyond the point of endurance. The whole cultus is expressive of the desire of the pious to conform in every slightest detail to the divine will. It is the apotheosis of obedience. This obedience is practiced in the eager hope

that thereby the heart of God may be touched so that his afflicting rod may be withheld (Lev., chap. 26). The large amount of ritual for the express purpose of making atonement, with its climax in the legislation for the great Day of Atonement (Lev., chap. 16), is the outstanding characteristic of the Priestly Code as over against the Deuteronomic and Covenant Codes. There we move in an atmosphere of comparative freedom and joy; here we are oppressed by fear and sorrow. In the hands of the majority the performance of this atoning ritual degenerated into an unethical and unspiritual formalism; but to the spiritually minded it was but the concrete embodiment of the great teachings regarding sin, repentance, and God enunciated by the prophets.

II

THE IDEA OF ATONEMENT IN NON-CANONICAL JEWISH LITERATURE

BY

ERNEST DEWITT BURTON

Professor of New Testament Literature and Interpretation
The University of Chicago

CHAPTER IV

ATONEMENT IN NON-CANONICAL JEWISH LITERATURE

In the preceding chapters, the history of the idea of atonement for sin has been traced through the canonical books of the Old Testament. But contemporary with the latest of these books, and subsequent to them down to and overlapping the period of the rise of the New Testament books, is a body of Jewish religious writings which cannot be overlooked in a study of the biblical idea of atonement. For though these writings have not been taken up into our Bible as the limits of the canon are defined by Protestants—several of them are in the canon of the Roman Catholic church—yet none the less they reflect Jewish thought of the period preceding and contemporary with the rise of Christianity. And this being the case, they belong to the sources of our knowledge concerning that movement of thought which we are studying, and which assuredly did not cease when the last of those books subsequently taken up into the Old Testament canon was written, to be resumed only when the earliest

New Testament book was written or the earliest New Testament sermon was preached. On the contrary it was continuous even through the period once wrongly called the four centuries of silence. It is the purpose of the present chapter to set forth the ideas of atonement which are expressed in this non-canonical Jewish literature of the period approximately 200 B. C. to 100 A. D.

One of the most notable facts respecting the Jewish thought about atonement as reflected in this literature is the small place which that thought apparently gave to the sacrifices.

From the restoration of the temple in the days of Zerubbabel till its destruction in 70 A. D., temple worship, including sacrifice, continued practically without interruption. With the exception of the three years from the desecration of the altar in 168 to its restoration in 165 B. C. the daily sacrifices failed not, so far as we know, for a period of nearly 600 years, 516 B. C. to 70 A. D. First and Second Maccabees bear abundant evidence that the loyal Jews of the second century B. C. were zealous for the temple and the sacrifices, and the victory of the Maccabees was in no small part a victory for the temple.

With these facts before us it might seem as if the temple was the center of Judaism, and sacrifice the central element of the Jewish religion. This, however, is very far from being the case. Two facts of this period must be remembered, the rise of the synagogue and the practical triumph of legalism. Throughout by far the larger part of the period of which we are speaking the real center of the religious life of the Jewish people was the synagogue rather than the temple. And the synagogue was under the control of Pharisaism, and Pharisaism was fundamentally neither ritual nor spiritually ethical, but legalistic. This does not signify that the sacrifices were neglected. On the contrary they were diligently and enthusiastically observed. A large body of priests offered not only the daily sacrifices, but the multitudes of offerings made by pilgrims from afar on the occasion of the great feasts. Nor does it signify that Pharisaism was opposed to sacrifice. It means that the sacrifices were taken up into the legal system, and that so far as they were not simply acts of worship having no theological significance, they were looked upon purely from the point of view of legalism. Sacrifices were to be offered, not because of any inherent virtue

in them, but as the sabbath and the fasts were observed, because the law required it and God demanded obedience to the law.

Bousset, speaking of the rites of the synagogue, says:

> The new religion was a religion of observance, which along with many other things had taken up into itself the content of the cult-piety which was already devoid of vital force and hastening to death. And this is the real reason that the cult maintained itself at all in that uncontested respect which it undoubtedly enjoyed. It retained its standing not on its own account, but in consequence of the authority of the law. The requirements of the cult were and remained a part of the great incomprehensible divine will as this was expressed in the law. Cult was no longer the basis and support of piety, but legal piety instead was the support of the cult.[1]

A striking evidence of the correctness of this statement of Bousset, which shows also that it applies even to the pre-Maccabean period, is furnished in Sir. 35:1–7:

1. He that keepeth the law multiplieth offerings.
   He that taketh heed to the commandments sacrificeth a peace-offering.
2. He that requiteth a good turn offereth fine flour;
   And he that giveth alms sacrificeth a thank-offering.

[1] Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, 2d ed, p. 134. The context shows that by "cult" Bousset means particularly the sacrifices.

3. To depart from wickedness is a thing pleasing to the Lord.
   And to depart from unrighteousness is a propitiation (ἐξιλασμός).
4. See that thou appear not in the presence of the Lord empty.
5. For all these things are to be done because of the commandments.
6. The offering of the righteous maketh the altar fat;
   And the sweet savor thereof is before the Most High.
7. The sacrifice of a righteous man is acceptable;
   And the memorial thereof shall not be forgotten.

The first three verses affirm that keeping of the law and doing righteousness constitute the acceptable offerings to God. The sentences must not be reversed; the thought is not that he that multiplieth offerings keepeth the law, and he that sacrificeth a peace-offering taketh heed to the commandments. The author is not exalting sacrifice, but on the contrary depreciating it, affirming that keeping the law and doing righteousness are the things that make one acceptable to God. The meaning of vss. 4–7 is not wholly clear. If the words "offering" and "sacrifice" be interpreted in the light of the preceding verses as referring to acts of righteousness, then the later verses only reinforce the thought of the earlier ones. If the words be

taken in their literal sense, vss. 4–7 supplement vss. 1–3 by affirming that though unimportant as compared with the keeping of (other) commandments and almsgiving, sacrifices are nevertheless to be offered. Upon the latter interpretation, however, the bringing of offerings is enjoined simply on the legalistic ground that the law commands it. Sacrifice is not as such propitiatory; propitiation is achieved by departing from unrighteousness (vs. 3); sacrifices are to be offered because the law requires them, and from a *righteous man* are acceptable.

In the preceding chapters of Sirach the other side, the uselessness of sacrifice on the part of the wicked, is set forth, repeating in effect the teaching of the prophets.[1]

> The Most High hath no pleasure in the offerings of the ungodly;
> Neither is he pacified for sins by the multitude of sacrifices.
> As he that killeth the son before his father's eyes
> Is he that bringeth a sacrifice from the goods of the poor (Sir. 34:19).

The chief thought of the writer is of course that sacrifice is unavailing for a man who is continuing in his sins. Yet it is not enough to say that

[1] Cf., e. g., Isa., chap. 1.

he denies that sacrifices alone, without righteousness, avail to make one acceptable to God; this he does not so much say as take for granted. Atoning value lies for him not at all in the sacrifices as such, but wholly in righteousness and obedience to the law. Sacrifices are of significance only as a part of legalism, and have no other value than any other acts of obedience to law. And this is the doctrine of the book throughout. The writer approves of the priesthood and the sacrificial system (7:31 ff.; 14:11; 38:11 ff.; 45:6–22) and men are even enjoined in time of sickness to couple with repentance, and the aid of the physician, an offering, as means of averting death. Yet the sacrifices are as a whole simply a part of what the law requires and their offering is chiefly for the benefit of the priesthood, i. e., for the maintenance of the cult. To atone for sins or to make peace with God they are of no value save as obedience to the statutes of the law, and indeed of less value than other acts of righteousness.

If we turn from this book which stands at the beginning of our period to one which belongs near its close, the so-called II (or IV) Esdras, we find here an even more marked absence of any dependence upon the sacrifices as a basis

of atonement. This is doubtless due in no small measure to the fact that the book was written after the fall of Jerusalem, when, the temple no longer standing, sacrifices could no longer be offered. Yet it remains a significant indication of the relatively unimportant place which the sacrifices had filled in the Jewish thought concerning the basis of atonement that in a book written within a decade or two after the destruction of the temple, and dealing specifically with the problem of sin and its consequences, and especially the sin of Israel, there is not a single direct or indirect reference to sacrifice, beyond the bare mention of the fact that the altar is broken down and the temple destroyed (10:21).

Nor does the literature of the period disclose any considerable divergence from the legalistic attitude toward the sacrifices. The book of Sirach, indeed, says of Aaron:

> He chose him out of all living
> To offer sacrifice to the Lord,
> Incense and a sweet savour, for a memorial
> To make reconciliation (ἐξιλάσκεσθαι) for thy people (45:16).

But it continues immediately:

> He gave unto him his commandments,
> Authority in the covenants of judgments,

To teach Jacob the testimonies,
And to enlighten Israel in his law (45:17).

Johanan ben Zakkai also (about 70 A. D.) calls the altar "the sign of reconciliation" and says of the stones that they bring reconciliation between Israel and the heavenly Father,[1] and Rabbi Joshua, according to tradition, lamented the destruction of the temple, saying "Woe is us, because the place is destroyed at which the sins of Israel were atoned for." Yet it is to be observed that this language does not, at least in the case of the son of Sirach, go beyond the distinctly legal point of view already ascribed to him; moreover, that taken at its highest valuation the altar has to do with the relation of Israel as a whole to God and not with that of the individual.

The idea of atonement for the sins of the individual through sacrifice is expressed, however, in one book of the later pre-Talmudic literature. In II Maccabees (written about 90 B. C.), we read that when Heliodorus, having essayed to seize the treasures on deposit in the temple, was smitten and brought to utter helplessness,

certain of Heliodorus' familiar friends besought Onias

[1] Bousset, 2d ed., p. 228, citing from Tosephta Baba, VII. 3.

to call upon the Most High, and grant life to him who lay quite at the last gasp. And the high-priest . . . . brought a sacrifice for the deliverance of the man. But as the high-priest was making the propitiation, the same young men appeared again to Heliodorus . . . . and said, Give Onias, the high-priest, great thanks, for for his sake the Lord hath granted thee life (3:31–33).

Again, speaking of certain soldiers of Judas who had fallen in battle, and under whose garments there were found tokens of heathen idols, the author says that the survivors

betook themselves unto supplication beseeching that the sin committed might be wholly blotted out. . . . . And when Judas had made a collection man by man to the sum of two thousand drachmas of silver he sent unto Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice for sin, doing therein right well and honorably in that he took thought for a resurrection. For if he were not expecting that they that were fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle to pray for the dead (12:42–44).

It is notable that in neither of these cases does the offender himself bring the sacrifice; personal repentance is apparently excluded. It looks as if the sacrifice had intrinsic propitiatory value. But on the other hand the second passage suggests that the sacrifice was conceived of as a prayer offered by the survivors for their companions who, they believed, had lost their lives because of their unfaithfulness to Jehovah. And

the first passage read in the light of this seems also to convey a similar thought. It is for the sake of Onias, who offered the sacrifice, that the Lord grants Heliodorus life. While therefore these passages are sufficient to show that at least as late as a century before the Christian era (and doubtless much later) sacrifice was by some conceived to have propitiatory value, even apart from the repentance of the sinner, they contain no clear theory as to how the sacrifices effect their result. They are elements of a legalistic system, or have the value of intercessory prayer. Expiatory value is never ascribed to them.

If from the incomplete and not wholly consistent evidence we conclude that probably throughout this period there persisted among the people, perhaps encouraged by the priests, the idea that sacrifice atoned for sin, with a more or less indefinite theory as to how it accomplished this, this is but the continuation of what we have seen to have existed in the Old Testament periods (cf. chap. iii, p. 60). Sacrifices were undoubtedly offered: regularly by the priests for the people; in connection with the feasts; as special thank-offerings; and sometimes as means of deliverance for those

who for their sins had fallen under the special wrath of God. How these latter sacrifices, or indeed the other, became effective—of this little is said in the extant literature. But there is distinct protest against the idea, which therefore was probably more or less common, that sacrifices possessed an intrinsic value, even aside from repentance and righteous conduct. This denial of intrinsic value to the sacrifices, repeating the teaching of the pre-exilic prophets, is the *teaching* of the period, so far as it has come down to us; the faith in them is the more or less prevalent error of the time against which the successors of the prophets protest as the prophets before them had done. In short, we find sacrifices as a part of an accepted legalistic system, and protest, in the spirit of the old prophets, against reliance upon them as having intrinsic atoning value.

But it is not in connection with the sacrifices only that we must seek for the thought of the Judaism of the Maccabean and New Testament period in respect to atonement. For there are traces in Jewish literature of this period of the idea that the suffering and death of men effect the escape of others from punishment or disaster. This takes place however not through human

sacrifice, of which there are occasional traces in the Old Testament, but through the voluntary death of members of the community. Whether the idea as found in the later Jewish books is developed from the germ contained in the conception of the suffering servant of Jehovah in Isaiah, chap. 53, or under the influence of pagan ideas, the conception appears at any rate in a few passages of this period. Josephus, *Ant.*, i, 13, 3, puts into the mouth of Abraham the statement that Isaac offered in sacrifice will inure to his advantage, but without a hint that the death of Isaac is of advantage to him because of any expiatory value that it possessed. The language is:

> And since thou wast born, die not by the common way of departing from life, but by thine own father sent forward to God the father of all, by the law of sacrifice, since he (God), I suppose, hath decreed that thou shalt depart from life not by disease or war or any of the other calamities that are wont to befall men, and expects thy soul with prayers and the offices of religion, and will place thee by himself. And thou, for my protector and guardian of my old age—for this especially did I bring thee up—thou shalt have procured me God instead of thyself.

The Second Book of Maccabees, speaking of the death of the seven sons of a widow who were

slain by Antiochus for their fidelity to the Jewish religion, reports that the last one of the seven spoke thus to the tyrant:

For we are suffering because of our own sins; and if for rebuke and chastening our living Lord hath been angered a little while, yet shall he again be reconciled (*καταλλαγήσεται*) with his own servants. . . . . But I, as my brethren, give up both body and soul for the laws of our fathers, calling upon God that he may speedily become gracious to the nation (*ἵλεων ταχὺ τῷ ἔθνει γενέσθαι*), and that thou amidst trials and plagues mayest confess that he alone is God; and that in me and my brethren thou mayest stay [*or*, there may be stayed] the wrath of the Almighty, which hath been justly brought upon our whole race (II Macc. 7:32, 33, 37, 38).

The so-called Fourth Book of Maccabees (written probably between 60 B. C. and 70 A. D.) records this as the prayer of the martyr:

Thou O God knowest that I might have delivered myself, but under the torments of the fire I am dying, for the sake of the law. Be gracious to thy people. Let the punishment suffice thee which I for them endure. For a purification let my blood serve them, and as a substitute for their lives take my life (6:27–29).[1]

The author himself says:

For because of their courage and endurance, admired not only by all men but even by their tormentors, have

[1] *Ἵλεως γενοῦ τῷ ἔθνει σου, ἀρκεσθεὶς τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ περὶ αὐτῶν δίκῃ. Καθάρσιον αὐτῶν ποίησον τὸ ἐμὸν αἷμα, καὶ ἀντίψυχον αὐτῶν λάβε τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχήν.*

they become the cause that the tyranny which was endured by the people has come to naught, they having conquered the tyrant by their endurance, so that through them the fatherland was purified (1:11).

And again:

These therefore, for God's sake sanctified, have been honored not only with this honor, but also in this that for their sakes the enemy had no more power over our people, and that the tyrant was punished and the fatherland purified, they becoming as it were a substitute[1] (*ἀντίψυχον*) for the sins of the people through the blood of those pious ones, and through their reconciling death (*ἱλαστηρίου θανάτου*) the divine providence has rescued

[1] The translation of *ἀντίψυχον* (6:29; 17:22) by "substitute" is not quite accurate and is liable to mislead, but is used for lack of a better term. All the observed instances of the word occur within about two centuries, the present passages being the earliest, followed by Ign. *Eph.* 21:1, *Symrn.* 10:2; *Polyc.* 2:3; 6:1; Luc. *Lex*, 10; Dio Cass., 59:8. These examples show that the word is an adjective equivalent to *δοθεὶς ἀντὶ ψυχῆς* (not to *ψυχὴ δοθεῖσα ἀντί*); see especially Luc. *Lex*, 10: *χρήματα ἀντίψυχα διδόναι ἤθελεν.* Cf. for such compounds with similar force of this preposition *ἀντίδουλος, ἀντικοσμητής, ἀντιπάθειος.* The word is probably much older than the earliest extant examples. In IV Macc. and Ign. it is employed as a neuter substantive. In Ign. it bears a somewhat attenuated sense, meaning *given on behalf of, a thing devoted to* (another) without implying apparently that the life of that other is thereby saved (cf. Zahn on Ign. *Eph.* 8:1 and Lightfoot's translation). In IV Macc. it is probably used in its proper sense, *a thing given for a life*, and with reference to the fact that the martyr is saving the life of his fellow-countrymen. It is the context, not the word, which conveys the thought that he does this by giving his own life in death, and which shows *how* his death was conceived to secure the life of his fellows.

the hitherto sadly oppressed Israel. For the tyrant Antiochus turned his attention to the manliness of their courage and to their steadfastness under torture, and proclaimed to his soldiers their steadfastness as an example (17:20–22).

These passages do not seem to yield a perfectly clear and self-consistent view. Even the passages in IV Maccabees waver between two views, or seek to combine them. There is probably truth in the remark of Deissmann:[1]

> These passages are important for the understanding of the thought of the representative character of the sufferings of the righteous. It is evident that the whole thought arose not as a fixed dogma, but perfectly clearly through the mystical and acute intuition of religious pathos.

In other words, these passages reflect not a clearly formed doctrine, but a thought concerning the meaning of suffering arising under especial and exceptional circumstances, and not unnaturally combine views not wholly assimilated to one another.[2] On the one side the death of the martyr is represented as sufficiently meeting God's demands because of the sin of the people (IV Macc. 6:28); and on the

[1] Kautzsch, *Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen*, Vol. II, p. 160, footnote.

[2] Cf. Dr. Smith's remarks on Isa., chap. 53, in chap. ii, pp. 34 ff.

other it averts further evil by the effect which the spectacle of the courage and devotion of the martyr has upon the mind of the tyrant (17:23). If these two conceptions are to be blended in one, this would yield the thought that God in his providence permitted these to suffer that under the influence of their courage and fidelity to the law the tyrant might be moved to stay his hand; and that their death became propitiatory in that it furnished to God the means by which he might check the persecuting hand of the tyrant. It is perhaps in favor of this view that the writer in vss. 22, 23 connects the substitutionary suffering and propitiatory death of the martyr, the providence of God, and the effect of their courage on the mind of the tyrant. Yet the course of thought as expressed is not transparently clear, and it is perhaps most probable that the writer has conjoined different points of view without thoroughly harmonizing them. If then there are two points of view not wholly assimilated, it is with the first of them that we are specially concerned. It is clearly said that by the death of the martyrs further suffering is averted from the nation and that their blood is therefore given for the life of the nation, and their is death propitiatory. Yet this is not

in the sense that the place of the guilty is taken by other and wholly innocent persons. For those who suffer are a part of those who have sinned. In II Macc. the martyr included himself in the sinful nation of whom therefore he is the representative. In IV Macc. he prays that the punishment which he and his brothers voluntarily endure may suffice to meet the demands of God. The whole passage implies not that they have endured the equivalent of that which was due the nation, but that they represent the nation, and that their representative suffering is graciously accepted by God. Whether the thought of the writer goes beyond this and includes some explanation of how the suffering of a few suffices does not clearly appear. It is clear only that the idea of substitution is qualified by that of representation.

Possibly we may discover in this passage the germ of that conception which more or less dominated later Jewish thought, that a man's standing before God is determined by the amount of good works to his credit. These good works are primarily a man's own deeds of obedience to the law. But as it became impossible not to recognize that so tested men fell short of full satisfaction of the law's demands

there arose the theory, which eventually became a distinct element of later Jewish theology, that the man who is deficient in good works may draw upon the superabundant good works of the fathers. As a specific form of this idea it is occasionally said that the sufferings of the innocent, even of children dying in infancy, count also as a treasure to be credited to others.[1] But this idea of the merits of the fathers was not in New Testament times a controlling thought. Still less so was the notion of merit through suffering. The passages in the books of Maccabees referring, it will be observed, exclusively to the case of the seven martyrs put to death by Antiochus, show us only the possible early beginnings of this idea, but by no means reflect a definitely framed doctrine.

It is perhaps quite as likely that the underlying thought of the Maccabean passages is that which is implied in a notable passage in Sirach:

> And Phinehas the son of Eleazar is the third in glory,
> In that he was zealous in the fear of the Lord,
> And stood fast in the good forwardness of his soul
> when the people turned away.

[1] See Weber, *Die Lehre des Talmud*, pp. 314 ff., 320 f.; Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums*, 2d ed., pp. 228 f.; S. Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, p. 254.

> And he made reconciliation (ἐξιλάσατο) for Israel (45:23).

The passage is evidently based upon Num. 25:11:

> Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath from the children of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I consumed not the children of Israel.

Phinehas had slain an Israelite and a Midianitish woman whom the Israelite had brought into the camp. "So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel." The explanation given by the author of Numbers is that by his act Phinehas had manifested God's displeasure against sin even as Jehovah himself felt it; and that this manifestation of divine wrath sufficed, so that further exhibition of it was unnecessary. This is evidently also the view of the son of Sirach, who adds expressly that thus Phinehas made reconciliation for Israel. Phinehas made atonement not by suffering but by the infliction of suffering, and this act has its value in its revelation of the divine attitude toward sin. It is probably too much to affirm with confidence that this idea was also in the mind of the author of II and IV Maccabees. But it is evident that such a doctrine would account for both the

Sirach and Maccabean passages and that it is as old as Num. 25:11. Manifestation of the divine wrath against sin, whether through the infliction or the endurance of suffering for sin, suffices to make further punishment unnecessary. He who accomplishes such revelation of the divine wrath makes atonement.

But if the forgiveness of the sin of the individual is not achieved through sacrifice, and if the suffering or righteous zeal of individuals for God avails for their brethren only in the sense that through the manifestation of the divine displeasure with sin thus accomplished the nation as a whole is spared further expression of God's wrath, how was the Jew of the Maccabean and New Testament period taught to expect to secure the forgiveness of his sins?

The Wisdom of the Son of Sirach is quite clear on this point. Sin is forgiven because of subsequent righteousness, especially because of almsgiving. Righteousness makes atonement for sins.

> He that honoreth his father shall make atonement for sins (3:3).
>
> For the relieving of thy father shall not be forgotten
> And instead of sins it shall be added to build thee up.

In the day of thine affliction it shall remember thee;
As fair weather upon ice,
So shall thy sins also melt away (3:14,15).

Water will quench a flaming fire;
And almsgiving will make atonement for sins (3:30).

Concerning atonement (ἐξιλασμοῦ), be not without fear,
To add sin upon sins (5:5).

Sin not against the multitude of the city,
And cast not thyself down in the crowd.
Bind not up sin twice;
For in one sin thou shalt not be unpunished.
Say not, He will look upon the multitude of my gifts,
And when I offer to the Most High God, he will accept it.
Be not fainthearted in thy prayer;
And neglect not to give alms (7:7–10).

Fear the Lord with all thy soul;
And reverence his priests (7:29).

Before judgment examine thyself;
And in the hour of visitation thou shalt find forgiveness (εὑρήσεις ἐξιλασμόν).
Humble thyself before thou be sick;
And in the time of sins show repentance.
Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vow in due time;
And wait not until death to be justified (18:20–22).

My son, hast thou sinned? add no more thereto;
And make supplication for thy former sins (21:1).

He that taketh away vengeance shall find vengeance
from the Lord;
And he will surely make firm his sins.
Forgive thy neighbor the hurt that he hath done thee;
And then thy sins shall be pardoned when thou prayest.
Man cherisheth anger against man;
And doth he seek healing from the Lord?
Upon a man like himself he hath no mercy;
And doth he make supplication for his own sins?
He being himself flesh nourisheth wrath;
Who shall make atonement for (ἐξιλάσεται) his sins?
(28:1–5).

This is also the doctrine of the book of Tobit:

Give alms of thy substance, and when thou givest alms, let not thine eye be envious; turn not away thy face from any poor man, and the face of God shall not be turned away from thee. As thy substance is, give alms of it according to thine abundance: if thou have little, be not afraid to give alms according to that little: for thou layest up a good treasure for thyself against the day of necessity: because alms delivereth from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness. Alms is a good gift in the sight of the Most High for all that give it (4:7–11).

Good is prayer with fasting and alms and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with unrighteousness. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold; alms doth deliver from death, and it shall purge away all sin. They that do alms and righteousness shall be filled with life; but they that sin are enemies to their own life (12:8–10).

The Prayer of Manasseh, of uncertain date, but probably belonging to our period, lays all stress upon repentance as the condition of forgiveness, making no mention of sacrifice or other means of obtaining it.

I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities: but I humbly beseech thee; forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities. Be not angry with me forever, by reserving evil for me; neither condemn me to the lower parts of the earth. For thou, O Lord, art the God of them that repent.

The Psalms of the Pharisees[1] express reverence for the altar and the sacrifices, but make repentance, righteousness, and fasting the ground of forgiveness.

They went up to the altar from every kind of uncleanness: yea even in their separation they polluted the sacrifices, eating them like profane meat (8:13).

Whoso doeth righteousness layeth up for himself life at the Lord's hand: and whoso doeth wickedness is guilty of his own soul to destroy it.

For the judgments of the Lord are in righteousness according to each man and his house.

With whom wilt thou deal kindly, O God, save with them that call upon the Lord?

He will cleanse the soul that hath sinned, if it make confession and acknowledgment.

[1] Written about 60 B. C.

For upon us and upon our faces is shame because of all these things.

And to whom will he forgive sins save unto them that have committed sin?

The righteous thou wilt bless and wilt not call them to account for the sins that they have committed: and thy kindness is in respect to those that sin, if they repent (9:9–15).

The righteous man maketh inquisition continually in his house that he may put away iniquity.

When he falleth into transgression he atoneth for his sin of ignorance[1] by fasting, and will humble his soul (3:8,9).

If then we attempt to state the view of atonement that is reflected in the literature of this period it is this: Peace between God and the

[1] Ryle and James read, "With his trespass offering he maketh atonement for that wherein he erreth unwittingly, and with fasting he afflicteth his soul." But this (*a*) requires emendation of the text, *ἐν παραπτώματι αὐτοῦ ἐξιλάσατο περὶ ἀγνοίας ἐν νηστείᾳ καὶ ταπεινώσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ* by the transposition of *καὶ* and *ἐν νηστείᾳ*, and (*b*) involves the assumption that the translator misunderstood his Hebrew original and having before him perhaps אַשְׁמָם mistakenly took it to mean sin instead of sin-offering; (*c*) yields a meaning less consonant with the thought of these psalms as elsewhere expressed and with the general thought of the times than do the words as they stand unamended. Gebhardt rejects the emendation of Ryle and James, but for *τὴν ψυχήν* reads *τῆς ψυχῆς*. This yields the meaning, "he atones for his sin of ignorance by fasting and humiliation of his soul." With *ἐν παραπτώματι*, cf. *ἐν ἁμαρτίαις*, 9:12. On the thought of the passage cf. vs. 4; 9:12–15; Tobit 12:8 ff.

nation is maintained through the keeping of the law, of which sacrifice forms a part, but not an especially conspicuous part. When God is especially angry with the people for their sins he may be reconciled by a conspicuous act of righteousness on the part of some member of the nation, or a manifestation of the righteous attitude of God toward men in the suffering or death of representatives of the people. As respects the individual, there still remain traces of the idea, which the prophets had denounced, that sacrifice has intrinsic atoning value. But such traces appear chiefly in the opposition to such a conception. The writers of the period, with one exception, teach that for the individual atonement is effected through repentance and righteous living. The definition of what constitutes righteous living is partly ethical in the proper sense, partly legalistic. Of all righteous deeds almsgiving was apparently thought of as most effective for securing the divine favor.

III

THE IDEA OF ATONEMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

BY

ERNEST DEWITT BURTON

Professor of New Testament Literature and Interpretation
The University of Chicago

CHAPTER V

ATONEMENT IN THE TEACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The teaching of John the Baptist bearing directly or indirectly upon the subject of atonement[1] for sin is found, so far as reported in the Synoptic Gospels, in Luke 3:7–17[2] and the parallels in Matthew and Mark.

Luke 3:7–17: He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin

[1] The word "atonement" does not occur in the gospels. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is found in the A. V. of Rom. 5:11 only, where the Greek word is καταλλαγή. This word found also in Rom. 11:15; II Cor. 5:18, 19 is always translated in R. V. by "reconciliation." It is the idea expressed by this word in reference to relations between God and man with which this work deals. Whether the word occurs in a given teacher or writer is of minor consequence. Concerning the word "forgiveness," which is Jesus' common term, see below pp. 129 ff.

[2] The material of this passage is derived by Luke, mainly at least, from a source common to himself and Matthew, and distinct from Mark. While it is possible that the portion peculiar to Luke is derived from a special source, it is on the whole more probable that Matthew has in this case, as in not a few others, omitted a portion of the material before him, and that the whole passage as it stands in Luke is based on the same authority. The substantial correctness of this report of John's teaching there is no reason to question.

not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do? And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Master, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you. And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages. And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

The teaching of this passage is unmistakably clear. There is even now impending an expression of the divine wrath in irremediable judgment. This is to fall upon the Jewish nation,

and, chosen people though they be, none can escape from it on the ground that they are sons of Abraham. Yet it is not to destroy the nation as such; it is to be individual, judging between man and man, discriminating between wheat and chaff, and utterly destroying the latter. It behooves those who would escape to do so quickly. For the axe already lieth at the root of the trees. When the Mightier One whom John announces shall have come with his winnowing shovel, and his unquenchable fire, then forbearance will cease, repentance be too late, and judgment without remedy fall upon the unrepentant. This picture of the Coming One strongly resembles in some features the picture of the Son of David presented in the Psalms of the Pharisees, save that on the whole John's representation is much sterner than that of the Psalmist.

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their King, the son of David, in the time which thou, O God, knowest, that he may reign over Israel thy servant.

And gird him with strength that he may break in pieces them that rule unjustly.

Purge Jerusalem from the heathen that trample her down to destroy her, with wisdom and with righteousness.

He shall thrust out the sinners from the inheritance, utterly destroy the proud spirit of the sinners, and as

a potter's vessels with a rod of iron shall he break in pieces all their substance.

He shall destroy the ungodly nations with the word of his mouth, so that at his rebuke the nations may flee before him, and he shall convict the sinners in the thoughts of their hearts.

And he shall gather together a holy people, whom he shall lead in righteousness, and shall judge the tribes of the people that hath been sanctified by the Lord his God (17:23–28).

The cause of divine anger and impending judgment that John announces is clear. It is the sin of men, the sin of the nation.

The message, however, is not solely one of judgment. If judgment fall it will indeed be irremediable, but it is not inevitable. There are conditions on which one may escape the destruction of the axe that lies at the roots of the trees, and the unquenchable fire that burns up the chaff. The character of these conditions is significant. The prophet says nothing concerning temple sacrifice as a basis of forgiveness, as he says nothing concerning the neglect of temple or sacrifice as the cause of the divine wrath. There is sin to be forgiven, wrath to be escaped, but for all that John says there might have been no temple in Jerusalem, no altar, no sin-offering. Nor will Abrahamic

descent, membership in the elect people, avail to deliver from judgment. That John singles out this imaginable condition of atonement for express repudiation indicates that the men of his day must have been depending on it. But in John's thought it is worthless. Of a suffering servant of Jehovah on whom the iniquity of the nation is laid, and by whose stripes they are healed, the synoptic report of John's teaching says nothing. The mightier than he, who is to come after him, is to be a judge, not suffering, but inflicting swift judgment on all unrepentant sinners. It is John himself, not his greater successor, who brings a merciful message of warning and of possible escape from danger. The one condition of such escape is repentance. The repentant sinner, who evinces his repentance in his conduct, alone escapes the unquenchable fire that consumes the chaff. Baptism is indeed enjoined and administered, but so strongly does John insist upon the ethical condition of escape from wrath that the baptism must be regarded as no more than the outward act in which one expresses obedience to the message, and which as such expression contributes to securing repentance and forgiveness. Manifestly this is simply

the doctrine of the prophets of a much earlier time.

> Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eye; cease to do evil, learn to do well. If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land, but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured of the sword (Isa. 1:16 ff.).

This clear and unmistakable message of John is in no way qualified by the message which at a later time he sent to Jesus, asking, Art thou he that cometh or look we for another? For the reply which Jesus makes to this question indicates that John was still looking for Jesus to carry out the programme of judgment which he had announced for his greater successor, and that the comparative gentleness and mercifulness of Jesus' character, exceeding even that of John himself, was to John a stumbling-block. The answer of Jesus is in effect that John has thought too exclusively of judgment and given too little place in his thought of the greater coming one to those characteristics of mercifulness and kindness which equally with the sterner side had been set forth in the prophets of old. Yet with generous considerateness Jesus treats John's reluctance to modify his view not as a grave fault, but almost

as a virtue. He is no reed shaken with the wind to believe one thing today and another thing tomorrow. Yet blessed is he that finds no occasion for stumbling in the mercifulness of Christ.

If there is any teaching of John concerning atonement in the Fourth Gospel it is contained in the one sentence, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (1:29). The phraseology and imagery of this verse, we may without hesitation conclude, are derived from the description of the servant of Jehovah in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.[1] The precise phrase, "Lamb of God," does not indeed

[1] The expression, "that taketh away sins," might suggest the scapegoat; but with this explanation of the origin of the expression the word "lamb" is inconsistent. The word "lamb" might suggest the lamb of the passover; but the passover ritual makes no mention of the taking-away or the bearing of sin. The lamb of the sin-offering, or of the trespass-offering, might be supposed to be referred to; but neither of these offerings *requires* a lamb, the law at various times prescribing a bullock (Lev. 8:2), a goat (Lev. 10:16), a ram (Lev. 6:6), a lamb (Lev. 14:12), and in others leaving to the offerer his choice between a lamb and a goat (Lev. 4:28,32; 5:6). Though each of these parts of the Old Testament ritual may have had some influence in producing the expression "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," no one of them fully accounts for it, and it is unnecessary to include them even as contributory influences, since Isa., chap. 53, of itself furnishes an adequate explanation of the expresion.

occur in Isaiah, but it is easily produced from the combination of the expressions, "a lamb that is led to the slaughter," and "my righteous servant," or "smitten of God." Similarly the expression, "that taketh away [or beareth] sins," reproduces the first part of vs. 4, "he bore our griefs" (LXX, "he carries our sins"), or combines the thought of this verse and that of vs. 5, "the chastisement of our peace is upon him and with his stripes we are healed." The last words, "of the world," are probably an enlargement of the horizon of the original passage, as the latter was generally understood in New Testament times. Yet even these words have a legitimate basis in the passage if the interpretation set forth by Dr. Smith (see pp. 34 ff.) is correct.

What then does this language, looked at as a reflection of the preaching of John the Baptist, affirm concerning Jesus and his relation to the forgiveness of sin? Two answers must be considered.

On the one side, if we confine ourselves to the language which John is reported as actually using, and take the words in the sense which they bear in Isaiah, they describe Jesus as (*a*) gentle and innocent; (*b*) appointed of God; (*c*)

suffering vicariously in that he bears[1] as a load the sin of the world.

This characterization of Jesus is markedly different from the description which according to the Synoptic Gospels John gave of him who was to follow him. There he is a stern judge coming in swift and irremediable judgment upon unrepentant Israel, before whose coming there is opportunity to repent, but after whose advent there is only swift judgment for the sinner; here, a gentle, innocent man, to whom the sin of the world is a grief and a burden. But it is not impossible that the same prophet should have held both these conceptions. For let it

[1] There has been no little difference of opinion respecting the precise meaning of the words, *ὁ αἴρων*, which the English versions render, "that taketh away." In itself the word may equally well mean "take up, bear, carry," or "take away." It is moreover used in both senses in the Johannine writings: in the former in John 5:8–12; in the latter in I John 3:5. In the LXX of I Sam. 15:25, precisely this idiom, *αἴρειν ἁμαρτίαν* occurs, and in I Sam. 25:28 a synonymous expression, *αἴρειν ἀνόμημα*. In both cases *αἴρειν* means "to forgive;" in both cases the Hebrew verb is נָשָׂא, as in Isa. 53:4. In I John 3:5 we have the expression, *ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ*, "to take away the sins," meaning, "to cause sins to cease, to cause men to desist from sinning." In Isa. 53:4 the Hebrew is חֳלָיֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא, "he bore our griefs;" the LXX, *τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει*, "he bears our sins." The Greek verb, *φέρω*, never means "to take away," but "to bear, to endure." If then we assume that the expression in John 1:29 reproduces the thought of Isa. 53:4, as given in the LXX, then

be observed in the first place that the two utterances are not in the strict sense predicates of the same subject. The synoptic utterances of John pertain not to the person Jesus, but to the expected Greater One. In other words, John is there setting forth the kind of a successor that he expected. The language is that of prophetic expectation, not of observation. But in John 1:29 the Baptist is telling what he saw when Jesus came. True, he has just previously declared that Jesus is the one whom he expected. But it does not follow that he saw in him precisely what he expected. Having expected a stern judge, not more but less mild than him-

ὁ αἴρων must mean, not "that taketh away," but "that beareth as a burden." Nor does the change from φέρει to αἴρων modify this result. For the presumption is that when an author in quoting substitutes for an unambiguous term an ambiguous one, he means to take the latter in the sense of the former, not in the sense which the former does not bear. If it be said that we ought to go back to the Hebrew for John the Baptist's thought, since he presumably spoke in Hebrew or Aramaic, then there will be in the word נָשָׂא (found in Isa. 53:4 and in I Sam. 15:25; 25:28), which he presumably used, no presumption in favor of the meaning, "to take away," since though this word has much the same ambiguity as αἴρειν, it clearly has in Isa. 53:4 the meaning, "to bear, to carry as a load." From the point of view of John the Baptist, therefore, and the meaning of the word αἴρων interpreted by the original passage in Isaiah, there is little support for any meaning other than "that beareth as a burden." What the words meant to the evangelist is not at this point under consideration.

self, and having become convinced that Jesus was that Coming One, he may yet have seen in the face of Jesus coming back from his temptation the evidence of gentleness and of suffering because of human sin which wrung from his lips the startled cry, "I looked for a judge, and behold the Lamb of God that bears on his heart the sin of the world." Nor is the possibility of such a combination excluded by the synoptic narrative of John's later message to Jesus. That only shows that the new impression of Jesus did not radically modify his original expectation. Gentle and suffering though Jesus be, he looks for him still to act the part of judge.

But on the other hand it may be maintained that if John derived the language from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, it is but reasonable to suppose that he meant to express in this phrase more than the bare meaning of the corresponding expression in Isaiah, reproducing also some part of the thought of the context. And to this it may be added that we must of necessity reach the thought of the Baptist through that of the evangelist, and that as a Johannine word, *αἴρων* must be interpreted in the light of I John 3:5 and so

means "taking away."[1] This interpretation resolves itself again into three: (*a*) If we take the participle in the sense suggested in I John 3:5, but interpret it harmoniously with the synoptic representation of John's conception of the Coming One, the phrase will be strongly paradoxical, like the expression "the wrath of the Lamb" in Rev. 6:16. In this case John combines his previous thought of the coming one with his new impression of Jesus, exclaiming, "Behold the gentle lamb who by executing irremediable judgment upon obdurate sinners is to banish sin from the world." (*b*) If we give to the participle the meaning which is suggested by combining the thought of Isa. 53:4 with that of 53:5, and interpret these verses in accordance with that interpretation of the whole chapter which Dr. Smith has set forth (chap. ii, pp. 34 ff.) it presents to us Jesus as one who, bearing himself the penalty of men's sins, delivers them thereby from condemnation and wrath. (*c*) If we insist not too strongly upon the reproduction in this phrase of precisely the idea expressed in Isa., chap. 53, or if we allow for some possible

[1] The possibility that ἆραν should be taken in the sense in which the verb is used in I Sam. 15:25; 25:28 hardly calls for discussion in view of the fact that the meanings suggested by Isa. 53:4 and I John 3:5 lie so much nearer at hand.

uncertainty as to precisely the idea of the prophet himself, we may think of John as looking upon Jesus and saying: "Behold the servant of Jehovah whose mission it is to suffer, not for his own sin, but that he may bring light and enlightenment to those who are in sin, and so deliver them from sin." We reach substantially the same result upon more tangible grounds if we take the participle *αἴρων* in the sense suggested by I John 3:5, and understand it to refer to such a banishment of sin from the world as is harmonious with the idea expressed in the phrase "Lamb of God." Jesus is then characterized as a meek and gentle one who wins men to righteousness and banishes sin by converting men to goodness.

Of these three variant forms of the second interpretation, form (*a*) differs from the first interpretation only in that the diversity of thought which that view found between the synoptic representation of John's idea of his successor and the Fourth Gospel report of John's impression of Jesus when he appeared, this view finds within the limits of the Johannine language itself. One's judgment of the two views must accordingly be much the same. The utterance ascribed to John is on this interpretation sur-

prising, indeed strikingly paradoxical, but it does not necessarily conflict with the synoptic report.

The other two views however are quite inconsistent with the synoptic narrative. For on either of these interpretations of John 1:29 the language of that verse does not simply express frankly the impression which Jesus makes upon John at the moment, but constitutes an ascription to Jesus of a career and mission quite at variance with that expectation which John had cherished respecting the Coming One, and which neither now nor later did he wholly surrender. It is one thing to be Israel's swift judge and punisher; it is quite another to be the sufferer through whose sufferings light and salvation are to be brought to men. Not indeed that Jesus might not be both sufferer and judge. Christian thought at least has found a way of combining them, either conceiving that Jesus was first sufferer and then judge, or looking upon his judgment as self-executing, a revelation upon the basis of which men judge themselves, and all the more surely because the revelation was in part through suffering. But according to the synoptists John looked for a judge coming to speedy judgment and inflicting punishment upon sinners. And such a judgment is irre-

concilable with the character of the lamb who endures the penalty of the sins of others, or who, himself the embodiment of meekness and gentleness, banishes sin by winning men to righteousness. It is one thing to purge the world of sin by swift destruction of the sinners; it is quite another to accomplish this result by gently winning men to righteousness or by suffering vicariously the penalty of their sin.

It appears therefore that, of the four interpretations of John 1:29 which are lexicographically possible, two bring the language into such conflict with the synoptic report that if we accept the former as historical we must regard the Johannine record as at this point unhistorical; two are not wholly inconsistent with the synoptic record, but find in this verse no teaching concerning atonement beyond the intimation that sin causes suffering to the righteous representative of God, or that it is his mission by his gentleness and purity to win men from sin. No one of them therefore gives us a doctrine of atonement which we can ascribe to John the Baptist.[1]

[1] Which of the two positions we take respecting the historicity of the record will be determined mainly by considerations outside of this passage. If such considerations compel us to assign the gospel to the second century and to an author who neither had the material for a trustworthy history nor undertook to write a book

What then is the teaching of John the Baptist concerning atonement and forgiveness of sin as we learn it from all the gospels? Substantially this: The wrath of God which is about to fall upon the sinners in Israel in dire punishment inflicted by the Coming One may be escaped, and men may attain unto salvation, by repentance on their part manifesting itself in good works. According to the Fourth Gospel, he whom John recognized as the Coming One for whom he had looked, bore when he appeared, not the appearance of a stern judge, but of a meek and gentle lamb of God, suffering under the load of human sin. This, however, is not

of history, then there will be no decisive reason for exempting this passage in particular from the general sentence of untrustworthiness: along with the rest of the book it will represent the ideas of the second-century author rather than of the prophet of the wilderness of Judea. A discussion of what this passage would mean as an expression of the views of such a second-century writer lies outside the scope of this chapter. But I think I have shown that there is nothing in these words as they stand to necessitate our denying them to John if only they be interpreted as an expression of the impression which Jesus made upon John when he came to him after his baptism, framed in language derived from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, though not necessarily reproducing the whole thought of the chapter. In other words, if on other grounds the historicity of the Fourth Gospel be impugned it will of course be impossible to affirm the accuracy of this particular statement respecting John's preaching; but in this expression itself there is no valid ground for denying the historicity of the record.

an element in John's doctrine of atonement, but a testimony of observation and insight which, while he honestly expressed it, he could not altogether harmoniously combine with his expectation concerning the work that was to follow his own.

CHAPTER VI

ATONEMENT IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

I. IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Were it not that the limitations of space forbid it, it would be wise to begin our study of Jesus' teaching concerning atonement with a careful survey of his thought about sin and God's attitude toward it, and about sacrifice and the temple. We must content ourselves, however, with brief statements on these points, and pass on to that which has more strictly to do with our subject, Jesus' teaching concerning his own death, his attitude in the presence of death, and his express statements concerning the conditions of divine forgiveness.

Jesus clearly recognized the fact of alienation between God and man and found the cause of it in human sin. He gave no formal definition of sin, but especially in the teaching which is recorded in the synoptic gospels clearly meant by sins those evil deeds both of heart and life, inward and outward, which men commit and the committal of which creates evil character and other evil consequences. See especially Mark 7:15–23. These sins so separate between

God and man that persisted in they cause eternal alienation from God and the everlasting ruin of the sinner (Mark 3:28, 29).

Toward the sacrifices of the temple Jesus' attitude was that of toleration. Though not opposing them, he ascribed to them no intrinsic value as a means of reconciling God and man. He taught explicitly that they had no such value in the case of a man who having wronged his fellow-man had not made peace with him (Matt. 5:23, 24), and never pointed men to them as a means through which they might come into right relations with God. His cleansing of the temple was not an expression of zeal for the sacrifices. On the contrary, it was a defense of the rights of those who came there not to sacrifice, but only to worship, as against those who permitted the Court of the Gentiles to be used as a market-place for sacrificial animals. His participation in the Passover ritual shows that he was not opposed to sacrifice as such, but furnishes no evidence that he thought of the Passover lamb as having expiatory or propitiatory value.

The earliest recorded clear statement of Jesus concerning his death is that found in Mark 8:31 ff.:

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him and began to rebuke him. But he turning about and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou thinkest not the thoughts of God, but the thoughts of men. And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it.

For our present purpose three things are most significant in this statement of Jesus: (*a*) At the time of this utterance Jesus foresaw that he would be brought to his death by the opposition of the Jewish leaders. (*b*) The fact that Peter's protest against the thought of death was for him a temptation to be repelled, suggests that he could have escaped it; that he was to die because of the opposition of the Jewish leaders suggests how he could have escaped it, viz., by conforming in a measure to their ideas. But this is the thought of men, not of God. Fidelity to God's thought demands that he go forward unflinchingly, though death awaits him along that path. (*c*) What is happening to him is not

something exceptional. All his disciples must follow in the same path, not, indeed, necessarily of death at the hands of the Jews, but of readiness to die if fidelity to the will of God involve death. Like himself they must deny themselves and take up the cross, and he who takes up his cross, though he may not die upon it, has in spirit and intent laid down his life.

Thus Jesus evidently looks forward to his death as the inevitable result of fidelity to the work that was given him to do; the working-out in his life, under the conditions imposed upon him, of the principle which it is the common duty of himself and his disciples to accept and follow even unto death.

The second passage of capital importance is Mark 10:45. The sons of Zebedee had asked for seats at the right hand and the left in his glory. And Jesus had told them that they should indeed share in his sufferings, drink the cup that he drank, and be baptized with his baptism, but that to sit on his right hand and on his left was not his to give. And when the ten heard it and were displeased,

> Jesus called them to him and saith to them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority

over them. But it is not so among you; but whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all. For verily (*καί*=also, even) the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

The context here also is of great significance. Jesus laid down as the principle in accordance with which his disciples must live that true greatness is greatness in service. The leader must be servant of all. And this principle he enforces by the statement that it is the principle of his life also, and that he carries it even to the point of giving his life a ransom for many.[1]

The expression "to give his life" (*δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ*) is in itself capable of, or at least suggests, two meanings according as the word "life" is taken (1) in its physical sense, meaning that which constitutes one a living being, the loss of which is death, or (2) in the broader sense, meaning the soul as endowed with energy, power, self-direction, hence in

[1] It has indeed been questioned whether these words are those of Jesus, and not rather a comment of the evangelist. But the uniform habit of this evangelist in using the term "Son of Man" only in words of Jesus, together with the fact that the occurrence of the passage in Matthew is against its being an addition to the original Mark, makes it highly improbable that the words are here an editorial comment.

effect one's life-energies. In the former case the phrase means "to surrender one's life, to die;" in the latter case "to devote one's self, one's energies," involving no doubt death itself as a possibility, yet only as an incident of the self-devotion; essential in spirit, but not in fact. The similar expression *τίθημι ψυχήν* probably has the former meaning in John 10:15, 17. But in the only example which I have discovered of precisely the expression employed in Mark, it bears the second meaning:

> And the days of Mattathias drew near that he should die, and he said unto his sons, Now have pride and rebuke gotten strength, and a season of overthrow and wrath of indignation. And now, my children, be ye zealous for the law and give your lives (*δότε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν*) for the covenant of your fathers. And call to remembrance the deeds of our fathers which they did in their generations (I Macc. 2:50 f.).

And then follows a list of the faithful fathers, no one of whom died for his faith. Mattathias, moreover, it is to be remembered, died a natural death, having devoted his life unto death (but not strictly speaking in death) to the defense of the law and the covenant of the fathers.

The word here translated "ransom" (*λύτρον*)

is found in classical writers from Herodotus and Pindar[1] down, and is used in three senses (1) "a money price paid to secure the release of one who is in captivity or bondage," (2) "anything by which one may avert the vengeance of the gods for a crime committed," (3) "a recompense, requital, offset." In the Septuagint the verb λυτρόω is used of release effected in any way whatever; λύτρον with one exception denotes a money price. This one exception is Num. 3:12, where the Septuagint uses this word in the statement that the Levites shall be the ransoms for the firstborn, meaning that God will accept the life-service of the Levites instead of that of the firstborn sons of the nation.[2] There is no instance in which the word is used of a life given in death. The verb is used not infrequently in the later Jewish books in the general sense "to deliver." But I have found no examples of the noun.[3]

[1] See, e. g., Pindar, *C. T.* 7, 141; Aesch. *Chor.* 48; Plat. *Rep.* 393 D.

[2] Cf. chap. iii, p. 58.

[3] Mention ought also to be made in this connection of the passages in IV Maccabees discussed in chap. iv, p. 79, where the word ἀντίψυχον is used. If it be supposed that the two words are synonymous, the Maccabean passage would perhaps suggest that Jesus looked upon the giving of his life in death as so satisfying the necessity for revelation of the divine attitude toward the sin

The preposition "for" (*ἀντί*) in the phrase "for many" calls for no extended discussion. A reference to any lexicon will show that it is used much like the English "for" in a variety of senses, and in particular may mean either "instead of" (Luke 11:11), or "for the sake of, to obtain the release of" (Matt. 17:27).

Combining these various lines of evidence, (*a*) the context in which Jesus impresses upon his disciples the necessity that they who would be leaders must give themselves in service to others, and follows this instruction by an appeal to his own example, (*b*) the usage of the words and phrases, "to give life," "ransom," "for," (*c*) the implication of the word "ransom" that the many are in some state from which release is desirable, we reach this as the most probable meaning of Jesus' words: the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,

of the nation that it constituted for the nation a means of deliverance from death. But there is no direct evidence that Jesus had this passage in mind, still less that he meant to express by his word not only the idea of *ἀντίψυχον* in IV Maccabees but also the suggestions of the context. Indeed, it is not at all certain that IV Maccabees was written before the time of Jesus. All that this passage respecting the Jewish martyrs can do for us, therefore, is to bear witness to the existence of certain ideas concerning the significance of martyrdom as current approximately in the days of Jesus.

and without reserve to devote his life, even if need be unto death, that by so doing he might release many from the bondage or misery in which they are held. This also his disciples ought to do for others.

Though no express mention is made of that from which men are to be released, the general tenor of Jesus' teaching and attitude toward life leaves no room for doubt that he has in mind the sins of men and their consequences. It is easy to go beyond this and to read between the lines various definitions of the precise relation between Jesus' own devotion of himself to service, even to death, and the deliverance of men. But we are probably truest to his thought when we rest simply in that which the passage clearly expresses, viz., that he gave his whole life-energies that he might deliver men from the bondage and consequences of their sins; adding only that the context implies that in this he was fulfilling a universal human duty—for he demanded the same of his disciples—and that the passage already examined, Mark 8:31 ff., suggests that such self-devotion issued in his case in a violent death because of the implacable hostility of the Jewish leaders to him and his unflinching fidelity to this very duty. His

death is the consummate expression of his life. The passage is thus, despite the great difference in setting and terminology, at one with Isa., chap. 53, in teaching the great principle of vicarious suffering. The mission of the good is to serve their fellow-men, suffering if occasion require for the wicked. This universal law finds its pre-eminent exemplification in the life and death of the Son of Man.

A third passage of great importance is Mark 14:24:

> And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many.[1]

The language concerning the blood of the covenant seems to be based on Exod. 24:6–8. As God there made a covenant with Israel sealed with blood, so Jesus seals with his blood a covenant[2] between God and men represented

[1] Matt. 26:28 adds the words "for the remission of sins," *εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*, and Luke 22:20 speaks of the covenant as new. Both these variations from the Mark form are probably interpretative additions, correctly interpreting Jesus' thought, but not otherwise to be taken into account in the study of the teaching of Jesus. It is therefore unnecessary at this point to discuss the question whether Luke 22:19*b*, 20 is an original part of the Luke text or an addition from I Cor. 11:24.

[2] There is perhaps also a tacit reference to the new covenant of Jer. 31:33, though this is clearer in reference to the Pauline account in Luke 22:19*b*,20 than in the original synoptic account.

in the person of the disciples. On the occasion of the ratification of the covenant between Jehovah and his people, to this effect that they would keep the law of God, peace-offerings and burnt-offerings were offered. And Moses divided the blood into two parts, half he sprinkled on the altar and half, when the people had heard and accepted the covenant, he sprinkled on the people. That the people may solemnly express the devotion of their lives to God without giving them up in death, an animal is slain and the blood, which symbolizes their lives, sprinkled upon the altar to indicate the giving of their life to God. On the other hand, when they have pledged themselves to keep God's covenant, the other half of the blood representing the life of God is sprinkled on the people to signify the giving of his life to them. Thus the people and their God are bound together in a mutual life-covenant, according to which they are to devote their lives to him in keeping his law and he is to be their God.

But the use of the word "poured out" or "shed" (*ἐκχυννόμενον*) in Mark 14:24, for which there is no corresponding term in Exod. 24, suggests the possibility that Jesus had in mind something besides this passage. Two explana-

tions are possible. The verb used in the gospel is never employed in the Septuagint of the killing of a sacrifice, but is used (*a*) of the shedding of blood in murder (Gen. 9:6) and (*b*) of the pouring out of the blood of the sacrifice at the base of the altar. This is spoken of, e. g., in the consecration of Aaron and his sons (Exod. 29:12), where it apparently signified the devotion of their lives to the service of God; and in connection with the sin-offering (Lev. 4:7, 18, etc.) but not in reference to any other sacrifice. The use of this word in this connection therefore suggests either the violent character of Jesus' death, or an association of it with the sin-offering. In the former case it conveys no implication as to the meaning of his death. In the latter case the parallelism cannot be too hard pressed, since of course there was no act after his death strictly corresponding to the pouring-out of the blood of the sacrificial animal at the base of the altar; it can only suggest that his death was one of the steps in the divine plan for bringing to men the forgiveness of their sins (cf. chap. iii, p. 60). It is the latter interpretation which was adopted by the first evangelist and expressed in the added words "for the forgiveness of sins." If we accept this view

as on the whole more probable, the language of Jesus combines a reference to the burnt-offering and peace-offering, by which the covenant between God and Israel was ratified, with a reference to the sin-offering, in which the poured-out blood symbolized the self-devotion of the offerer to God, through which atonement was made and his sin forgiven. In either case the expression "on behalf of many" indicates that the suffering and death of Jesus were vicarious and endured to accomplish something for men. That that something pertained to their relation to God and was therefore essentially atoning in the proper sense of the word, we are assured not only by the whole work and spirit of Jesus, but in particular by his reference to the covenant. In neither case do the words in themselves or through the implication of the Old Testament passages which they suggest express the idea of atonement through vicarious endurance of penalty. The death of Jesus is on behalf of men, that they may come into covenant relation with God. To this the word ἐκχυννόμενον adds either the suggestion that this death is a violent death, or that as the death of the sacrificial animal is necessary to the obtaining of the blood by which a covenant with God was

symbolized, so it is at cost of his death that Jesus brings men into the covenant with God.

But we have still to ask what is the significance of the fact that the disciples drink the wine which is the symbol of Christ's blood? If drinking means only what sprinkling means in the covenant-making to which the language contains a reference, then it implies the impartation to them of the life of God, which is indeed the essence of the covenant. But it seems evident that it means more than this. In the drinking they are active. It can hardly signify less, therefore, than that they accept the covenant and for themselves ratify it. But not even this seems quite to satisfy the meaning of the act. That which they drink is the symbol of Jesus' life, not, we must believe, that physical life that he was surrendering, but that ethical life which he was expressing in shedding his blood. To drink this symbol of his life is to accept for themselves that ethical life, that principle of life, which was that of Jesus, the principle which he had laid down months before when he told his disciples that if any man would come after him he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow him. Possibly we are in this suggestion going beyond what is distinctly implied in these

words. But we are certainly not exceeding the limits of Jesus' thought as elsewhere clearly expressed, and can hardly be wrong in finding in the words at the Supper a re-expression of the previously expressed thought.

By his language at the Last Supper, then, Jesus taught his disciples that he was giving his life to the end that a covenant of peace might be ratified between God and many men. He dies not that his death may furnish the physical blood for a covenant ceremony—for there was no such ceremony—but that he may bring about in very fact that which was symbolically accomplished when Moses in the wilderness sealed with the blood of animals the covenant between Jehovah and the people. This is essentially the idea of Isaiah, chap. 53. With this is perhaps associated also the thought that such covenant relation of God with sinful men involves confession of sin on man's part and forgiveness on God's part. It is in any case distinctly implied that the spirit which Jesus exemplifies in his death must be the spirit and principle of his disciples, and there is no suggestion that this death is of value save to such as thus accept as theirs the life-principle of Jesus.

There remain two passages in the Synoptic Gospels which call for brief discussion.

Luke 22:37: For I say to you that this which is written must be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned with lawless men: for that which concerneth me hath fulfilment.

Luke 24:25, 26: O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?

Into the critical and exegetical problems which these passages present it will not be necessary to enter here. It is sufficient to say that taking the passages as they stand they indicate that Jesus found in the Old Testament certain ideals of life and conduct which he felt it needful for him to follow and which involved for him a death at the hands of his opponents. This fact, and the nature of those ideals we have already discovered in the other passages which we have examined, in which we have also discovered that Jesus looked upon these ideals as of universal application and obligation.

But the thought of Jesus about the meaning of his death is conveyed not only in express teaching concerning it, but in his attitude in the presence of it. One of the passages already

discussed, Mark 8:31 ff., is the first to demand our consideration under this head also. Jesus having predicted his rejection by the Jews, and his death in consequence, and Peter having strongly rejected this thought, Jesus turns on him with the words: "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou thinkest not the thoughts of God but those of men." The word "Satan" indicates that to Jesus Peter was at that moment a tempter. And this signifies in turn that the thought that Peter presented was one that appealed to Jesus, but which he instantly recognized and put away as not in accordance with God's thought. And this means that the death that he had predicted was repulsive to him, that he shrank from it, that his facing it was a matter of courageous devotion to duty, not a choice of that which was agreeable.

This attitude Jesus maintained to the end; his feeling of repugnance for death only grew more intense as he drew nearer to it. It is expressed again in the prayer in Gethsemane:

> Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt (Mark 14:36).

Here as before there is evident the shrinking with horror from death, and yet the resolute

going forward to death. Only, as it draws nearer, there springs up the hope that possibly he may escape it consistently with God's will. But this he sees is not to be, and he goes forward unflinchingly to his death.

This horror of death cannot be the mere dread of physical pain, or of the act of dissolution. Many a hard-hearted criminal has faced death with a calmness and an indifference which are wholly lacking in Jesus. Many a martyr has gone to the stake with songs of triumph on his lips, and with a positive exultation in his fate which made him almost indifferent to pain. But Jesus cannot die thus. The only credible answer to the question, why this is so, is found in the language in which he first speaks of his death distinctly. He is to die rejected by his people. His death is the culmination of his nation's hostility to God his Father. All this is too terrible to him, too full of horror to permit either the calm indifference of the man to whom sin is no evil, or the exulting joy of the martyr. This dread of death, this pain under the sense of what death means to him reaches its climax in the experience of the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" These words are from the twenty-second Psalm,

which portrays the experience of a godly man who is suffering most keenly at the hands of his foes and cannot understand how the righteous God can permit it, how the God who loves him can thus apparently leave him in the hands of his enemies. The language is that of deep perplexity, the language of one who can put no other interpretation upon the facts than that God has forgotten him; yet in the midst of these facts refuses to surrender his faith in God, and in the same words in which he expresses his perplexity and boldly puts upon the events the interpretation which seems to him the only possible one, expresses also his faith in God: "*My God, my God!*" In the latter part of the psalm he issues from the storm into the calmness of quiet trust. But the first part expresses as real a faith as the latter. For there is no stronger faith than that of him who clings to God in the face of what seems to him convincing evidence that God has forgotten him.

It is certainly fair to presume that the words on Jesus' lips have the meaning which they bear in the psalm. He, too, in the midst of sufferings which perhaps cloud his intellectual clearness, and certainly seem to him to mean that

God has deserted him to his enemies, he, too, refuses to doubt God, and clings to him still in the words, "*My God, my God!*" And, as in the case of the Psalmist, so in his case also, after the storm there ensues the calm, and he yields up his spirit with the calm and trustful words: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The attitude of Jesus toward his death is then consistent throughout. It is to him the dreadful result of human sin, from which, because it is this, he shrinks with horror, but to which, because it is necessary in order that men may be delivered from sin, and therefore is for him God's will, he unflinchingly goes forward.

It thus appears also that Jesus looked upon his suffering and death as vicarious, endured for others and for their deliverance. Yet it must also be observed that in his teaching as recorded in the oldest records he never definitely made it the basis of the forgiveness of sins.[1]

It remains therefore for us to ask what he taught expressly concerning forgiveness. The essential elements of his teaching are found in the following passages:

That ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins . . . . (Mark 2:10).

[1] On Matt. 26:28, cf. above, p. 119.

Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin (Mark 3:28, 29).

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much (Luke 7:47; cf. 48–50).

Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered these things? I tell you Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish (Luke 13:2, 3; cf. 4, 5).

And he spake this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none. And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground? And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit henceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down (Luke 13:6–9).

But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:13, 14).

And Jesus said unto him, Today is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham (Luke 19:9).

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men

their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:14, 15).

To these passages should also be added, Matt. 18:21–35, and Luke, chap. 15, which though of capital importance are not printed because of their length and familiarity.

The usual words for "forgive" (ἀφίημι) and "forgiveness" (ἄφεσις) as employed in reference to sin are undoubtedly taken from the legal vocabulary of the time, and refer to remission of, or forbearing to enforce, a debt or penalty. To forgive a sinner is to forbear to punish him, or not to enforce a claim against him. To forgive sins is to remit the penalty which would otherwise be enforced. Yet it is evident that the term as used by Jesus transcends the limits of the strictly legal sense. The parable of the prodigal son, to cite but one example, indicates that the repentant sinner is not simply released from punishment, but positively received into the fellowship and favor of his father.

Of the condition of forgiveness there is in the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels a fourfold statement. It is sometimes said to be repentance, sometimes faith, sometimes love of Christ, sometimes forgiveness of others. Yet this fourfoldness is only apparent. There

is in fact but one condition. Repentance involves, on the one side, a turning-away from the sin in which one has been living and, on the other, the beginning to live in a new and right way. That repentance in this sense is a condition of forgiveness, has its obvious ground in the fact that only when one has given over sin and turned toward righteousness can the righteous Father look upon the sinner with approval. And this in turn suggests what is also suggested by the variety of the conditions of forgiveness named in different passages, that forgiveness, involving the reception of the sinner into the fellowship and favor of God, is of necessity conditioned on the sinner himself becoming essentially right. Such essential righteousness may express itself in repentance, in faith toward Jesus, in love for him, or in the forgiveness of others.

The nature of forgiveness and the essentially ethical character of its condition are further indicated by the fact that the forgiveness which men are required to exercise toward their fellowmen is not the ignoring of wrong unrepented of, but the passing-over of the wrong which the wrongdoer has abjured. Men are never enjoined by Jesus to "forgive" unrepentant wrong-

doers. "If thy brother sin, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him; and if he sin against thee seven times in a day and seven times turn again and say, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." God himself offers no forgiveness to the unrepentant or the unforgiving; neither does he ask of men that they shall forgive the unrepentant. *Forbearance* toward the unrepentant sinner God exercises, and bids men exercise, but not *forgiveness.*

This also makes it clear why there is a sin which hath no forgiveness. The sin itself is apparently the assumption of an attitude of hostility toward truth, the speaking against the Spirit of God himself. This attitude, Jesus conceived, may itself become fixed, an eternal sin, and hence intrinsically unforgivable. Forgiveness of sin still continuing is for a holy being a moral self-contradiction.

It thus appears that, according to the teaching of Jesus, the condition of divine forgiveness is distinctly ethical. God approves and receives into fellowship not the man who has never sinned (of such Jesus knows none) and not the unrepentant sinner, but the sinner who with full purpose of heart turns from his sin to live righteously. Of a condition of forgiveness out-

side the man himself Jesus never speaks. His own suffering and death are effective in bringing about forgiveness because in them he exemplifies that relation to God and to men which God approves. Its significance in relation to forgiveness is in the revelation of the conditions of obtaining divine approval. But he alone is forgiven, received into divine approval, who appropriating this revelation fulfils the ethical condition therein revealed.

II. IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

So far we have drawn our evidence concerning the teaching of Jesus from the Synoptic Gospels only. Were there any marked difference between this report of Jesus' teaching and that which appears in the Fourth Gospel it would be necessary to inquire which of them is to be accepted as giving the more accurate account of Jesus' thought. We are released from this necessity by the fact that the difference between the two records, so far as concerns our present subject, is mainly one of form rather than of substance. The Fourth Gospel is undoubtedly much more affected in the presentation of Jesus' teaching by a desire to adapt it to the needs of the readers of the book than is the case with

the Synoptic Gospels. In accordance with this general tendency the doctrine of sin is presented in a much more abstract form than in the Synoptic Gospels. Instead of sins, concrete deeds, such as fornication, theft, dishonoring of parents, and the like, this gospel speaks of sin, of which the center and heart is rejection of truth, preeminently manifest in the rejection of Jesus, who is the Truth and the Sent of God. But fundamentally the doctrine is the same that is contained in the Synoptic Gospels, only adapted in form of presentation to a more philosophical type of mind than that for which the Synoptic Gospels were written.

As respects temple sacrifice, there is even less difference between John and the synoptists. The attitude of Jesus is entirely the same and the form of presentation differs but little. Here as there Jesus distinctly recognizes the temporariness and intrinsic valuelessness of sacrifice. They that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth, and neither Jerusalem nor Gerizim are to abide as places specially devoted to and suitable for worship.

As concerns the conditions of forgiveness, the situation is much the same as in respect to sin. The doctrine is fundamentally the same

but the form of presentation widely different. But in this case the form is so different and so related to the teaching concerning the death of Jesus that we must pause for a little fuller consideration of it.

The central thought of Jesus as it is given to us in the Fourth Gospel is expressed in the word "life" (10:10; 5:40; 17:3). Defined in the broadest sense in which the word is used in this gospel, life is the existence of a moral being according to the true ideal of such existence. Of life thus broadly defined God is the original possessor and ultimate source: "The Father hath life in himself." Other moral beings possess life through participation in the life of God, i. e., through fellowship with him. "This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Life in this sense is something more than existence. It does not come by birth or heredity. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and without such birth from the Spirit one cannot enter the kingdom of God. Moreover, sin separates men from God and creates the need of a new moral force to give true life. The slave of sin has no abiding place

in the Father's house, does not live in fellowship with him. It is this universal need that gives occasion to the mission of Jesus. "I am come that they may have life." "As the Father hath life in himself even so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." This life it is his mission to impart to others. The water that he gives is a fountain of life springing up unto eternal life. He is the bread of life, and he that eats his flesh and drinks his blood, even he that believes on him, has eternal life. To believe on Jesus is to accept him as the Christ, the representative of God, one with him in thought and in action; it is to accept his leadership and to enter into the divine way of living by entering into Jesus' way of living. It is to form a moral partnership with Jesus and thus, because he truly represents God, to come into fellowship with God. But even this statement, effective for practical purposes as it is, calls still for a definition of this life in moral terms. What is the central principle of that life which is reproduced in us through our fellowship with Jesus? The answer is twofold, though the principle is really simple and single. The controlling principle of the life of the Son is to do the Father's will. And the Father's will is that the Son shall

give his life for men. Obedience to the Father's will, service to men: these are the two sides of the one controlling principle. To live thus is to fulfil the ideal of moral life; this is to be at one with God.

The problem of atonement is therefore the problem of producing such life in men who now by reason of sin are out of harmony with God, in darkness and death. As in the Synoptic version of Jesus' teaching, therefore, so here the problem is an ethical one, and the conditions are moral; not arbitrary or artificial but such as the very nature of the end to be achieved demands.

What then has the death of Jesus to do with atonement, with the bringing of men into fellowship with God? The passages may be considered more briefly than in the Synoptic Gospels.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life (John 3:14, 15).

I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world (John 6:51).

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth the Father love me,

because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . . . No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again (John 10:11, 15, 17, 18).

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will the Father honor. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again (John 12:24–28).

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself (John 12:32).

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

Taken together, and in their several contexts, these passages testify to the following as elements of Jesus' thought about his death: (*a*) It is a necessity of his mission and his Father's will for him. Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. (*b*) In itself death was abhorrent to him. He shrank from it, and went forward to it not with

desire, but under the propulsion of his resolute purpose to do his Father's will. For this purpose had he come to that hour. (*c*) He laid down his life, voluntarily, out of love to his fellowmen. Of that love his death was the supremest possible expression. Like a good shepherd he gave his life on behalf of the sheep. (*d*) In this act of love he was the object of God's approving love. "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life for the sheep." (*e*) The principle under which Jesus acted in giving his life for others is one that applies also to all who follow him. (*f*) Through his death, wherein he reveals most completely the principles of his own life, he will exert upon men a powerful attractive influence, winning them to a life like his own.

If now we ask for a more specific definition of the way in which his death was to effect the end for which he died, how by dying he effected deliverance for men, and like seed cast into the ground brought forth much fruit, the answer must be suggested mainly by John 6:51 and 12:24–32. There is indeed a question whether in the former passage Jesus is speaking expressly of his death. Certainly this is not the pre-eminent thought suggested by the passage.

Neither before nor afterward in that discourse does he mention his death; nor does the language of vs. 51 unambiguously refer to death. The case stands much as with Mark 10:31; death is probably involved in Jesus' thought as a corollary of that which he has chiefly in mind, a necessary consequence for him of that devotion to the welfare of others of which he is expressly speaking, but is not itself the subject of discourse. What then does he mean by giving his flesh for the benefit of (ὑπέρ) the world? Literal reference to his body the discourse itself repudiates as coarse and absurd (vs. 63). To eat his flesh and drink his blood is to enter into fellowship with him through faith in him, through the acceptance of his teaching and the partaking of his spirit. The words, "I will give my flesh," then, can refer only to an act which promotes faith in him and the reception of his spirit. In so far as death is involved it is in this aspect, as a revelatory act wherein his spirit is manifested and men are led into true spiritual fellowship with him. As in the Synoptic Gospels, so here death is the culminating act in his revelation of the spirit of self-sacrifice, the supreme act of self-devotion to the good of others, a devotion which men must share with him if

they would be his disciples. It is involved in his mission because only through death can he fully accomplish his work, and adequately express his own self-devotion.

If there be any doubt respecting the intention of Jesus to intimate the application to his death of the moral principle which this passage teaches there can be none in the case of 12:24 ff. Here Jesus clearly speaks of his death, clearly characterizes it as a necessary means to the achievement of his mission, and distinctly indicates that the principle by which he was governed must govern the disciples also. He is to be as seed cast into the ground from which shall spring up an abundant harvest of lives like his own. To draw back from death is to fail of the end of his life, because he should abide alone. It is only a change in form of speech, not in thought, when in vs. 32 Jesus affirms that if he be lifted up from the earth he will draw all men unto him. Self-sacrifice for the good of the world makes universal and powerful appeal to the latent nobility that is in all men.

If then we compare the teaching of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels with that in John, we find that they are in substantial agreement. Two elements of Jesus' thought about his death

stand out distinctly in both: (1) His death is the result of two factors: the sin of the world, and his own loyal adherence to the principle of self-devotion to the interests of others; and (2) this principle is the true principle for all moral beings; all are bound to accept and obey it. What he did others ought to do. In so far as we fail to do it we fail to be truly his disciples. For it is not too much to say that Jesus did nothing, suffered nothing, that he did not ask his followers to do and suffer in principle, and, if occasion require, in fact. His own life and death are in all respects the exemplification of principles which he maintained to be applicable to all men and which he desired and expected his disciples to exemplify in their lives. He gave his life a sacrifice for sin in no sense in which he did not ask that we also give our lives in sacrifice.

To live in accordance with this principle is to obtain the divine approval. To live otherwise is to incur God's displeasure. Atonement is accomplished when men, abandoning their unloving way of life, turn with repentance to Jesus' way of life; forgiving as he forgave, loving as he loved. Apart from such repentance there is no forgiveness.

The supreme significance of the death of

Jesus as of his life is in its *revelation* of the will of God, and consequently of the ideal of life. It is redemptive for those who accept the truth thus revealed. Men are reconciled to God when, accepting the revelation made in the life and death of Jesus, they enter into the fellowship of his death and become partakers of his life. This it is to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Thus he ransoms them from sin. Thus he brings them into covenant relation with God.

CHAPTER VII

ATONEMENT AS CONCEIVED BY THE EARLY CHURCH

The title of this chapter might easily be challenged. For it must be admitted at the outset that we have no documents of which we can certainly affirm that they reflect the ideas of the early church on atonement, if by the early church is meant the pre-Pauline church or the church unaffected by Paulinism. Yet we are not without documents which, however incompletely they may represent to us the early non-Pauline Christian thinking, do at least afford us evidences of a type of thought not derived from Paul. The speeches in the early part of Acts certainly represent a type of thought about the death of Jesus and its relation to the salvation of men which is simpler than that of Paul and which can hardly be supposed to have come from him. Nor is the Epistle of James open to suspicion of having been produced under the positive influence of Paul. For though it is alleged by weighty authority among modern scholars to be one of the latest books of the New Testament, it seems more in accordance with the

evidence to assign its type of thought, if not the actual writing of the book, to a very early period. We venture therefore to class together the early chapters of Acts and the Epistle of James, and to ask what evidence they afford as to the thought of the early non-Pauline church about atonement.

The type of sin almost uniformly spoken of in the early part of Acts is resistance to the Holy Spirit and rejection of God's messengers, manifest conspicuously in the putting of Jesus to death. This is Peter's charge against the Jews, which Stephen reiterates, associating it (as Jesus had done in the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen) with the rejection of the prophets by the earlier Jews, and attributing both to resistance to the Holy Spirit.

In James the sins reproved are of a more general character, selfishness, love of the world, greed, oppression of the poor, a merciless spirit. Two passages are, however, of special significance: "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not it is sin" (4:17), and, "Judgment is without mercy to him that showeth no mercy" (2:13). The former of these finds sin in the rejection of truth known, the latter recognizes both God's hostility to sin and his willingness

to show mercy to those who are themselves disposed to mercy.

In the matter of temple sacrifices the early church took no decided step. Retaining the consciousness of relationship to Israel, with which at first it did not occur to them to break, they naturally continued to offer sacrifices, yet attached to them no special significance in relation to the forgiveness of the sins for which men were under the condemnation of God. They were a traditional part of worship, perhaps a means of atoning for unwitting transgression or neglect of ritual requirements, but in the main probably simply a part of the requirement of the law. They were not conceived of as a basis of the forgiveness of sins. In none of the passages in which the speakers in the Book of Acts answer the question, What shall man do to escape from the penalty of his sins? is sacrifice mentioned, but in all cases the inquirer is bidden to repent of his sins and turn to God, believing in Christ.

As concerns the significance of the death of Jesus, and the conditions of forgiveness, there is no lack of testimony:

Him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men

did crucify and slay, whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death (Acts 2:23, 24).

The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob hath glorified his servant Jesus; whom ye delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. But ye denied the Holy and the Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead (Acts 3:13–15).

But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets that his Anointed should suffer, he thus fulfilled (Acts 3:18).

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, who was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved (Acts 4:10–12).

For of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass (Acts 4:27, 28).

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew hanging him on a tree. Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a prince and a savior for to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel (Acts 5:30 f.).

Now the place of the scripture which he was reading was this:

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,
So he openeth not his mouth:
In his humiliation his judgment is taken away:
His generation who shall declare?
For his life is taken from the earth.

And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other? And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this scripture, preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:32–35).

And it shall be that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21).

Repent ye and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Repent ye therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from your sins (Acts 3:26).

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him (Acts 10:34, 35).

The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (Acts 10:36).

To him bear all the prophets witness that through his name every one that believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

They held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then

to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life (Acts 11:18).

In these passages taken from the speeches which the author ascribes to Peter, Stephen, and Philip, the death of Jesus is characterized as an act of wickedness and murder on the part of those who put him to death. This is repeatedly affirmed and the charge brought home to the consciences of the Jews before whom Peter and Stephen made their defense of themselves and their message.

On the other hand, it is looked upon as predetermined by God. The motive of the repeated assertion to this effect is not an insistence upon a doctrine of predestination, but a defense of Jesus against the assumption, natural to a Jewish mind, that death on the cross indicated his rejection by God. As against this interpretation of Jesus' death, the early Christian preachers contended that this death was predetermined by God, that it was a part of the divine plan. This assertion, the motive of which was primarily apologetic, naturally became a part of the positive faith of Christians, a positive argument for believing in Jesus as the Servant of God, appointed to be lord and savior.

This conviction that the death of Jesus was

predetermined of God is evidently based upon, or at least associated with, the persuasion that this death was in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy. Thus Peter in Acts 4:11 quotes the language of Ps. 118:22 concerning the stone rejected by the builders, and Philip finds in Isa., chap. 53, and its picture of the suffering Servant of Jehovah a text from which he could preach Jesus to the eunuch. It is significant also that the usual title for Jesus in these early chapters of Acts is παῖς Κυρίου, Servant of the Lord, an expression which is almost certainly derived from Isa., chaps. 42 ff. The very employment of this name of Jesus, found in the gospels only once or twice, and quite as rare in other parts of the New Testament, indicates that the early church laid hold of these chapters as furnishing an explanation of the death of Jesus. By this term and these chapters they turned his rejection and suffering from a reproach into an argument in his favor. By this application to Jesus of the prophetic description of the Servant of Jehovah, moreover, the early church not only turned the edge of the argument of their opponants against his messiahship, but evidently found also confirmation of their faith in him as lord and savior. In him as the Servant of

Jehovah they preached salvation, exhorting men to repent of their sin, especially the sin of rejecting him, and to believe in him; and assured them that in him and no other was there salvation, God granting forgiveness to all who thus repented and believed, even to the very murderers of his Servant Jesus Christ.

It would be easy of course to assume that because the apostles found in Jesus' suffering the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the Servant of Jehovah, therefore they found in this predicate or in Isa., chap. 53, all those ideas which the Christian church of later centuries found there and applied to Jesus. But the Book of Acts does not take this step, and if we are not to go beyond our evidence, we must forbear to ascribe to these early days the ideas of a later period not here expressed. And when we consider the situation in which they were placed, and the particular assertion respecting Jesus which they were then called upon to defend, we seem to have the less reason to go beyond the evidence. The simple, oft-repeated teaching which the Book of Acts reports as that of the pre-Pauline church is that forgiveness is granted even to the greatest of sinners when he repents of his sin, turns to the Lord, and

believes in Jesus whom God sent to turn men from their sins (2:21, 38–40; 3:19, 26; 4:12; 5:30, 31; 8:22; 10:34, 35, 36, 43; 11:18). He who rejects Jesus will find no other savior. For though baptism is mentioned in one passage (2:38–40), it is evidently as the outward expression of the acceptance of Jesus, and indispensable in the sense that a refusal thus to confess Jesus would under the circumstances be presumptive evidence that one did not really accept him.

Fear of God and the doing of righteousness are mentioned in one passage as the ground of acceptance with God (10:34, 35). This latter statement of the matter is significant as indicating why repentance is the condition of forgiveness. What God desires is a heart that loves righteousness and a life which practices righteousness. For the sinner this involves repentance, and for the rejecter of Jesus it involves acceptance of him.

In James, forgiveness is promised to those who repent and confess their sin, exaltation to those who humble themselves before God, salvation to those who put away their wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, and acceptance with God to those whose faith

manifests itself in works. Faith is in the main conceived of as faith in God, rather than specifically as faith in Jesus Christ, though the latter expression of it is also spoken of. The death of Jesus is nowhere spoken of in James.

The teaching of the early church concerning sin and atonement, therefore, so far as it is reflected in the first half of Acts and the letter of James is substantially as follows:

1. That which separates between God and man and brings upon men the wrath of God is resistance to truth, manifest in unkindness and injustice to men, in falsehood and perversity, and most of all, as respects the Jews of Jesus' own day, in their rejection of Jesus, the Servant of the Lord. On this wicked and untoward generation there is impending the judgment of God.

2. To deliver men from their sins God sent his Servant to turn men from their sin and to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. The death of Jesus was at the same time a fulfilment of the divine purpose disclosed in prophecy and an act of consummate wickedness on the part of those who brought it about. The suffering of Jesus was vicarious, in that he suffered innocently and on behalf of, for the benefit of, the guilty, but is not described as expiatory.

Nor is it set in any special relation to temple sacrifice, whether as supplementing it or supplanting it. The possibility that it was thought of as having the same function as the sacrifices and hence as taking the place of them is obviously excluded by the fact that while preaching that the death of Jesus was in fulfilment of prophecy and that he, raised from the dead, was a prince and savior, they continued their temple worship as heretofore. And that while thus preaching the death of Jesus and continuing the temple worship they preached forgiveness of sins on the basis of faith, repentance, and righteousness shows that neither in the temple sacrifices nor in the death of Jesus as displacing the sacrifices and having expiatory value did they find the basis of reconciliation with God.

3. Men are saved from the judgment of God, however great their sins, by repentance and turning to God, accepting Jesus Christ in faith. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But for those who reject the Lord as Christ there is no way of salvation. It is but another statement of the matter to say that faith must show itself in works, and that he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to God.

Such apparently was the simple conception of the significance of Jesus' death and of the basis of forgiveness which was held in the early church. It lacks much that was subsequently in Christian thought; but in its simplicity and its effectiveness it closely resembles that faith which common, everyday, untheologically minded Christians have held probably in all the Christian centuries.

CHAPTER VIII

ATONEMENT IN THE TEACHING OF PAUL

In turning to the teaching of the apostle Paul we find ourselves dealing with a mind for which the question of reconciliation with God, justification before God, was one of capital importance and for which, moreover, this question had immediate relation to the death of Jesus.

Partly because of the abundance of the material in Paul's letters, partly because there are some differences of emphasis between his earlier and later letters, and partly because the authenticity of the earlier letters down to and including Philippians, regarded as the first of the letters of the Roman imprisonment, is more firmly established than that of Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles, it seems best to deal first with the teaching of the letters to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, and Philippians, and later and more briefly with that of the later epistles.

Though the epistles of Paul are peculiarly rich in passages dealing with the fact of alienation between God and men, and with the cause of it, we must content ourselves with a few sum-

mary statements. The existence of such alienation is clearly and repeatedly affirmed by Paul (I Thess. 1:9; II Cor. 5:18–21; Rom. 1:18). The cause of it is found in sin, which is for Paul a comprehensive expression for all that is evil in the moral world (Gal. 5:19–21; Rom. 3:23; 5:12). The characteristic sins of the Gentiles, who as compared with the Jews are without law, yet are not devoid of divine revelation but have a knowledge of God and of his law, are idolatry, sensuality, violence, sins both of heart and outward life, both against man and against God (Rom. 1:21 ff.; I Thess. 1:9; 4:5; Gal. 5:19–21; I Cor. 6:9 ff.). The Jews, also, to whom was intrusted the law, i. e., the revelation of the will of God in organized form, have failed to live in accordance with God's law. In general they have been guilty of the same sins as the Gentiles, and in particular have relied upon obedience to statutes, circumcision, and the Abrahamic covenant, to make them acceptable to God, rather than upon their righteousness of life (Rom. 2:3, 17–24, 25–27; Gal. 3:10, 11). That which is common to the sin of both Jew and Gentile, its central element, because of which men are guilty, is resistance to truth. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven

against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness."

Of sinless men, in the sense of men who have fully conformed to the law of God and can therefore stand before him on their own merits, there are none, save Jesus. Yet this does not mean that all men have been wholly given over to sin, and are objects of the divine wrath. There are those who by patient continuance in good works have sought, and not in vain, for glory and honor and incorruption. In other words, while all have sinned, and none are able to stand before God on a basis of legal merit, yet there are those who, filled with the desire for righteousness, and living uprightly, have sought and obtained divine approval (Rom. 1:18—3:20).

Concerning the origin of sin in the race the apostle speaks only incidentally and somewhat obscurely. Rhetorically objectifying, almost personifying, sin, he speaks of it as entering the race through one man, and as passing in some sense from him to his descendants (Rom. 5:12). Yet the idea of a race-sin has not been taken up into Paul's theology as one of its vital elements. It is at most a remnant of his Judaic

thought unassimilated to his Christian thinking. The only sin that Paul knows of is the doing of sin by men, or the deeds which they do, and for such doing or deeds he regards the individual sinner as guilty because they involve violence to his better knowledge.

In the experience of men, at least of those who have not on the one hand wholly surrendered themselves to evil, and on the other not fully attained unto righteousness, sin involves a constant internal conflict. The better self approves the good and strives to do the good. The evil side of man, which is associated with his physical nature, impels him to sin (Rom. 7:5). Even the law which forbids the evil at the same time stimulates the evil nature to oppose the good (Rom. 7:7–24). All this, however, is experiential, not philosophical; it is but another expression of what has already been stated, namely, that sin involves resistance to or suppression of known truth. The "I" that does the evil, and the "I" that chooses the good, so that it is no longer "I" that do it, these are not for Paul two entities psychologically or philosophically distinguished but two aspects of the self which every earnest man discovers within himself, but which few ever attempt to

define. For Paul the flesh as a physical thing was not morally evil, and as a moral thing it was not a distinct entity, but simply the self doing evil in the face of a knowledge of good, and even of a certain choice of good. Fundamentally it is action contrary to known truth that makes sin guilt, and is the cause of the divine disapprobation of men.

Although the teaching of Paul concerning the basis of forgiveness is so intimately associated with his utterances concerning the death of Christ that the former must be expounded chiefly in connection with the latter, yet there are certain elements of his teaching concerning justification which require to be stated before entering upon the discussion of the meaning of Jesus' death. Three propositions, all found in Paul's writings, demand attention.

1. Jews and Gentiles alike are justified by faith only. This principle, established in the case of Abraham, has been in all periods since operative in God's relation with men, and now that God has revealed himself in his Son Jesus Christ, it is with new clearness reannounced to all men (Gal. 2:16; 3:9; 5:5; Rom. 3:21–28; 4:1—5:2).

2. Christ is the minister of God for the reconciliation of the world unto God. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses (II Cor. 5:19). Ultimate deliverance from wrath, moreover, is through his life. It is only through the results of the life of Christ operative in men that they are ultimately delivered from that wrath of God which otherwise must have fallen upon them. Permanent peace with God, ultimate escape from his disapproval, is achieved only through righteousness. "We by faith through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5).

3. In the final judgment God will render to every man according to his works. To them that by patience in well-doing have sought for glory and honor and incorruption, he will award eternal life; to the self-seeking that have obeyed not the truth, but have obeyed unrighteousness, there shall be wrath and indignation, This principle applies both to Jew and to Greek, and knowledge of law will justify none. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, not hearers of law, but doers thereof shall be justified (Rom. 2:5–16).

On the face of it the first and third of these

teachings are in direct contradiction. On the one side Paul affirms that not by works of law, but by faith does God justify men, while on the other side, he explicitly affirms that according to his works shall every man be judged, and that only doers of law shall be justified. This seeming contradiction has even been made the basis of the assertion upon the part of certain modern critics that the Epistle to the Romans is a composite work representing contradictory points of view and doctrinal positions. But such criticism is in fact wholly superficial. One must indeed read more than the bare words, must penetrate somewhat beneath the surface of Paul's language, but it is not difficult to discover the doctrine which underlies both these statements, and of which both are but variant expressions. The judgments of God are according to truth; not indeed based upon a reckoning-up of good and bad deeds, the one set down in bookkeeping fashion on the credit side, and the other on the debit side of the account, but upon actual character as God reads the heart, and as character manifests itself in life. Between this and the doctrine of justification by faith there is no contradiction. For in the thought of Paul faith is

fundamentally a receptive and obedient attitude toward God's revelation of himself and his will, especially as this is made in Jesus Christ.

In dealing with Paul's teaching concerning the death of Christ we are confronted with so serious an embarrassment of riches that to discuss all the passages as the intrinsic significance of each would demand, is forbidden by the limitations of our space. We must be content to examine a few with care and to deal very summarily with the rest. In discussing these passages it is of less importance that we take them up in their chronological order than that we avoid the error of reading into them meanings that they do not contain and then making the meaning thus imputed to them the basis for the interpretation of other passages. It is therefore expedient to begin with those passages which are most clear, or at any rate least obscure, and then proceed to those that are of less obvious meaning, guiding ourselves in the interpretation of these latter by the clearer meaning of the former. Adopting this order of treatment we may well begin with Rom. 5:5–10:

> And hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit that was given unto us. For while we were

yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

The purpose of the passage, 5:1–10, is to exalt the justification into which the believer enters by faith, by showing how much it involves, how much it carries with it; in particular by showing that if we are justified by faith, there is in this fact a well-grounded hope of final and complete salvation. The fulcrum of the argument, so to speak, is the love of God, which, on the one side proved by the death of Christ for our justification while we were yet sinners, on the other hand itself proves that God will not fail to save us from his wrath through Jesus' life. For our present purpose we have to note two points. (*a*) The death of Jesus is a convincing demonstration of God's love for sinners. God proves his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. (*b*) In the blood of Jesus, that is, in his death, we were justified;

through the death of Jesus we, while we were enemies, were reconciled to God. "Reconciled" and "justified" (as passives) are practically synonymous terms. "In his blood" and "in his death" are equivalent expressions. Of these two propositions the first is entirely clear. To God his Son is infinitely precious. Yet even his Son he gave to die that we, sinners and objects of his wrath, might be reconciled to him. Herein is incontestable proof of God's love to sinful men. The wrath of God against sinners does not exclude love. The death of Christ is the more convincing proof of God's love because it was for sinners, objects of his wrath, that he gave his Son.

The same thought that the death of Jesus is a manifesation of the divine love is expressed by Paul again in the eighth chapter of Romans:

> What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? . . . . For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31–38).

Akin to the thought that the death of Jesus is a

manifestation of the divine love is also the conception that the death of Jesus is a manifestation of the love of Christ. Thus in Gal. 2:20, the apostle speaks with evidently deep feeling of "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." And in the midst of the passage just quoted in part from the eighth chapter of Romans, occurs the sentence, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The expression "love of Christ," closely following a reference to the death of Christ, is evidently thought of as manifest in that death.

The second proposition expressed in Rom. 5:5–10, that through the death of Jesus we are justified, i. e., reconciled, taken into God's favor, is clear and unmistakable in itself. But there evidently lies behind it something that the statement itself does not disclose, viz., a thought as to what there is in the death of Jesus that should make it the basis of justification and reconciliation. For the answer to the question thus raised we shall have to look to other passages. And of these none is more important than Rom. 3:24–26:

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his

righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

Again limitations of space forbid us to enter into detailed interpretation of this most important passage and compel us to content ourselves with a statement of the results of interpretation. We begin with a summary of the propositions stated or clearly implied in it:

1. In the ages before the coming of Christ, God passed over sins of men; i. e., he suffered them in part to go unpunished.

2. This passing-over of sins was an act of forbearance on God's part; i. e., these sins deserved and might justly have received a punishment which they did not receive.

3. As a consequence of this passing-over of sins in forbearance the righteousness of God came under suspicion, i. e., because God did not punish sin to the full, the impression was created in men's minds that God was indifferent to sin, was not pained by it, was not indignant at it.

4. Under these circumstances, accordingly, God's righteousness having been brought under

suspicion by his forbearing to punish sin to the full, God made a public manifestation which had for its object the removal of this suspicion and the demonstration to men that he was righteous, that he was not indifferent to sin.

5. This public manifestation consisted in a setting-forth of Jesus in his blood, i. e., in his death before the eyes of all the world. It need scarcely be said that not the visible spectacle of Jesus on the cross, but the fact viewed in its moral and historical significance is what is chiefly referred to.

6. That which this public setting-forth of Jesus shedding his blood proved is something which was already true, but which having become obscured was in this event made manifest. This is implied in the choice of the words "set forth" and "showing," the latter made emphatic by its repetition. The death of Christ is in the view of our present passage a demonstration. God presents him to the view of men as dying; he does not, however, put him to death. And this presentation demonstrates God's righteousness, not creating nor satisfying it. God had not failed to be righteous, he had only failed, through forbearance, to convince men that he was righteous. The death of Jesus is a demonstration

to the world that what seems true of God is not true, but that so far from his being indifferent to sin it is on the contrary a perpetual pain to him, and he perpetually disapproves it, is angry with it. At the same time the expression "that he might be righteous" implies that a perpetual "passing-over" without "demonstration" would not only seem but be unrighteous.

7. In Jesus thus set forth in his blood, thus demonstrating God's righteousness, showing that God is not indifferent to sin, God provides himself a propitiation, i. e., makes it possible for him to show mercy toward those toward whom otherwise he would have been compelled to show wrath.

8. This manifestation of Jesus Christ in his blood, through which God's righteousness is demonstrated, becomes propitiatory through faith on the part of the individual sinner. In other words, it avails to turn away wrath not from all who have sinned, not from men in masses or nations, but from him who has faith.

9. These two last-named facts may be stated in other words, viz., that God set forth Jesus in his blood in order to prove his righteousness, this in turn having as its purpose that God might be righteous and accept the sinner who has faith

in Jesus. Thus it is evident that the propitiousness of God, which is on condition of faith on man's part, is more specifically the acceptance of the sinner who has faith.

10. Thus in Jesus Christ is provided for men a redemption, a deliverance from the condemnation of sin: in the words of vs. 24 they are "justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

11. This deliverance, viz., the acceptance of men on condition of faith apart from works of law, is undeserved on their part, a gratuitous act of grace on God's part.

Thus it appears that by direct assertion or by implication Paul represents the whole activity of God in this matter as one of grace. The sins of the past were passed over in forbearance. The demonstration of the divine righteousness which was needful to enable him to assume the forgiving and justifying attitude toward men was provided by God himself. The acceptance of men on condition of faith is expressly characterized as an act of grace.

While, therefore, the passage differs at first sight markedly from Rom. 5:5–10 in viewing the death of Christ as a demonstration of the divine hostility to sin rather than of love, yet

on closer comparison the same fundamental conception is seen to underlie it. If that passage expresses what we may venture to term the unreasoned intuitive interpretation of the fundamental meaning of the death of Jesus, this shows the result of the apostle's reflection upon the specific end which God sought through that death to achieve, without in any degree modifying or qualifying the view of the fifth chapter. Even for divine love there are in Paul's view conditions subject to which it must achieve its end. Two of these conditions are set forth in this passage. Forgiveness, acceptance with God, is possible only when on the one hand there is an adequate demonstration of the divine righteousness, and on the other hand faith on the part of him who is to be forgiven.

But this leads again to the raising of several questions, viz.: *How* does the setting-forth of Jesus in his blood make manifest the righteousness of God? *How* does the exhibition of Jesus in his blood become propitiatory? Why is the death of Jesus propitiatory *through faith?*

It must be admitted at the outset that Paul has neither here nor elsewhere returned direct answers to these questions. Yet it is scarcely possible that he had no answers to them. And

we can but make the attempt to bridge the chasm in his expression of his thought with such answers as are at least consistent with what he has himself expressed.

The first question is the most difficult to answer. How does the death of Jesus make manifest the righteousness of God? Righteousness is here, as the context shows, specifically the hostility of God to sin, the opposite of indifference to it. How does the suffering and death of Jesus demonstrate that God is not indifferent to sin? Some have been ready to answer that God's righteousness had been brought under suspicion by his failure to punish sin; it is now vindicated by the fact that the accumulated penalty of these sins is borne by Jesus in his death. Nor can it be denied that there are some expressions of Paul which might seem at first sight at least to favor such an interpretation. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him." "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for us." Yet it must be observed that these passages, whatever be their true interpretation, do not in any case convey precisely the thought which is by this interpretation attributed to the passage

in Romans. Paul does unquestionably conceive of the death of Christ as on behalf of men, and in a sense as instead of men. Yet he never affirms that the righteousness of God demands punishment of every sin, still less that it could be satisfied or vindicated by the endurance of punishment by another than the sinner. And certainly this passage is very far from conveying by anything which it expresses such a conception of the divine righteousness. It cannot therefore be claimed that we are shut up to this interpretation of the apostle's language, or that it is directly sustained by any other utterance of his.

On the other hand there is another explanation of this thought, which, though also nowhere expressly put forth by Paul, almost necessarily results from things which he has said. It may well be said that the apostle's underlying thought is that the death of Jesus demonstrates God's hostility to sin, through its exhibition of Jesus' own abhorrence of sin. Let several utterances of Paul be considered together: (*a*) Jesus is the image of God, the revelation of the glory of God (II Cor. 4:4–6). (*b*) God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, i. e., in Christ God is revealed reconciling the world to himself (II Cor. 5:19). (*c*) The reconciliation of the

world is effected through the death of Jesus. (*d*) The death of Jesus manifests God's love and Jesus' own love. In this, therefore, there is illustrated the general principle that Jesus is the revelation of God, that what we see Jesus to be we may infer God to be. (*e*) But the death of Jesus also manifests both God's hostility to sin (Rom. 3:25) and Jesus' own hostility to sin (Rom. 6:10). It is natural, therefore, to infer that when the death of Jesus is said to be a demonstration of God's hostility to sin, it is in accordance with the principle that in the face of Jesus Christ we see the character of God. If this falls short of demonstration, and it must be admitted that it does, it is at least to be said in its favor that it is in perfect harmony with all that the apostle says, and that it adds to what is expressly said only that which is needful to make the thought complete, and only what is in perfect analogy to what is expressly said.[1]

[1] It may help to apprehend the apostle's thought if we endeavor to conceive vividly the situation which he had in mind, even though we cannot be sure that he thought of that situation in just the way in which he describes it. Jesus was crucified on the cross by men who hated him and whose deepest reason for hating him was the holiness of his character. He had claimed to be in the fullest possible sense the representative of God the Father. In spite of the substantiation of this claim by a life of holiness, rather because

If, then, from the examination of this passage in the third chapter of Romans we return to consider the second of the two propositions which we found clearly stated in Rom. 5:9, 10, viz., that in the death of Jesus men are justified, reconciled to God, we find that it furnishes the answer to the question, what there is in the death of Jesus which makes it the basis of justification and reconciliation. Remembering that the two passages stand in the same epistle, only a few

of this substantiation, men hated him and delivered him up to death. His suffering is therefore an exhibition of the hostility of the world to God's holiness. Far deeper, we must believe, than any physical pain connected with the suffering of the cross was the pain that came to Jesus in the consciousness that men so hated holiness (and therein, however much they professed or even believed the contrary, really hated God) as to put to death him who manifested the divine holiness. In this Jesus is God's representative to us. In his suffering on the cross we have a manifestation more clear than anywhere else in the world of the true nature of sin and at the same time of the pain which such sin continually inflicts on God. It is the fullest manifestation of human sin because here we see most clearly illustrated that spirit which would lead men, if only they had the power, to put God out of his own universe; it is the fullest manifestation of the divine pain at sin, because at no other point in human history does God so uncover to us his heart as it suffers under the stroke of human sin.

The cross of Christ is in this view simply the emergence into the plane of human history, into the sight of human eyes, of the eternal divine tragedy. It is God's perpetual word to us that every sin of man smites him to the heart. The death of Christ is not the concentrated accumulation of the divine pain—it is the momentary laying bare to the gaze of men of that fact which is as old as

pages apart, and in the same general course of argument, we can but assume that the thought which is unexpressed but assumed in the fifth chapter is the same that is set forth in the third chapter. We conclude, therefore, that when in Rom. 5:9, 10, the apostle speaks of men as justified in Christ's blood and reconciled to God through the death of his Son, it is probable that his thought is that through this death there

sin, and will last while sin lasts, that the sin of man is a blow at God, which he feels with all its force. Thus is Jesus' death the manifestation of the sensitiveness of God to sin, i. e., of his righteousness.

But Jesus is also in his death man's representative. It is the continual representation of the apostle that Jesus died for men, on their behalf. He is a member of the human race. As such he joins himself in closest sympathy with men, his fellow-men. By virtue of this close union, this profound sympathy, he realizes intensely the hostility of God toward sin, because it is directed against his fellow-men. Being himself holy, he knows how God looks at sin; being a man in closest sympathy with men he realizes what the anger of God against men is, and suffers intensely in the consciousness that his fellow-men are the objects of the divine disapproval and anger. "Him who knew no sin, he made to be sin for us." He became for us a curse that he might redeem us from the curse. Thus he suffers on behalf of men for their sins, because this suffering is caused by their sin, by this close, vital, and sympathetic, though voluntary union with men; and at the same time through their knowledge of his suffering he manifests to men the true nature of God's attitude toward sin. Thus in this aspect of his sufferings also is there a manifestation of that righteousness of God which had been brought under suspicion by his forbearance with sin.

is afforded such a demonstration of the divine attitude to sin as makes possible the forgiveness and acceptance into favor of those who have faith in Jesus.

It is certainly in favor of this interpretation that it is more consonant with the apostle's clearly expressed dictum, that the judgment of God is according to truth, than that which finds in his words the intimation that Jesus endured penal suffering on behalf of men; while it by no means denies to them the expression of that true vicariousness which the apostle repeatedly affirms of the suffering of Jesus.

The answer to the second question, How does the death of Jesus become propitiatory by its demonstration of divine righteousness, is less difficult, being indeed almost immediately suggested by the context. The passing-over of sins had brought the divine righteousness under suspicion. This cannot always continue. God must not only be righteous, it is a necessity of his righteous relation to men that he shall leave them in no reasonable doubt respecting his righteousness. It is in particular a necessary condition of forgiveness, the acceptance of the sinner. To accept a sinner under circumstances which would imply that such acceptance was

grounded in indifference to sin would itself be to encourage sin. Hence a demonstration of divine righteousness, such as can leave no room for doubt concerning God's attitude toward sin, is the necessary basis of propitiation. The death of Christ is propitiatory because by its furnishing such a demonstration it makes possible a gracious attitude on God's part toward the sinner. This is indeed almost exactly what Paul says in 3:26, viz., that this demonstration of righteousness was made in order that God might be righteous and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus, two things which but for the manifestation of the divine righteousness in the death of Jesus would have been inconsistent, the acceptance of one not really and fully righteous, in itself and unaccompanied by some correcting demonstration, implying that God did not disapprove sin and hence was not righteous.

Nor is the answer to the third question, why faith is necessary to propitiation, difficult if only we hold firmly to the apostle's conception of the nature of God's judgment and the nature of faith. He speaks of Jesus set forth in his blood as propitiatory through faith, implying that the death of Christ has no propitiatory

power in respect to the unbelieving. It is distinctly implied also that the propitiation of God must not be inconsistent with the manifestation of his righteousness, since the setting-forth of Christ as a propitiation has as one purpose of it the manifestation of that righteousness. By the parallelism of his sentence Paul implies that the being propitious toward men is the acceptance of them. How then does faith make possible the acceptance of men? Now faith, as the apostle thinks of it, is as already stated a receptive and obedient attitude toward God's revelation of himself and of his will. The faith of Abraham is of essentially the same character, Paul implies, as his own Christian faith. Such faith is itself incipient and germinal righteousness. It is the keeping of the law of God in its inmost essence. It contains also the promise and potency of complete and actual righteousness, since it is the opening of the door of the soul to God, through which God enters, never again to depart and never to give over his work until it is complete. By faith we wait for the hope of righteousness; and he who has begun in us a good work will go on to complete it.

Now to accept as righteous one who has such faith in Jesus is simply to recognize the germ as

existing and as containing the promise and potency of the full fruit. It is to treat men in accordance not merely with the actual moral *attainments* of the present moment, but in accordance with what they are in fundamental character, and with what they are certain to become in actual conduct and character. It does not involve the assertion that men are now actually all that God requires, but that they are fundamentally so, and that there is in their fundamental rightness the potentiality of full attainment, a potentiality which is certain to become an actuality.

Thus faith makes possible propitiation and justification. Moreover, it is an indispensable condition of propitiation. To accept as righteous one who has no faith, is to accept as righteous one who is not righteous and gives no promise of becoming righteous. This would be not to prove but to disprove the divine righteousness. The death of Jesus is propitiatory only because it provides a means by which God is able consistently with the maintenance of his righteousness to be merciful to the sinner; it is propitiatory only in respect to those who have faith, since the acceptance as righteous of one who does not by faith lay hold on God would be a

demonstration that God was indifferent to the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness. The death of Jesus cannot avail to make this possible, for it is a contradiction of exactly that which the death of Jesus was intended to demonstrate. Propitiation is not withheld from those who have no faith. It has intrinsically no effect in respect to them.

Thus in Jesus Christ is provided for sinners a redemption, a deliverance from the condemnation of sin. From the penalty of sin which otherwise must have been inflicted upon sinners, that the divine righteousness might be manifested or even maintained, there is provided for all who will believe a way of deliverance, because in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ has been found another method of making manifest the righteousness of God, and so a basis of reconciliation to God of all who have faith. This death he suffered on our behalf. He died that we might not die. His death is at once a demonstration of God's disapproval of sinners and of his love and of Christ's love for them. But this demonstration is of no avail for the reconciliation of the sinner unless there be faith on the part of the sinner. Him who has faith God accepts, because in that faith is

germinal righteousness and the possibility of a complete achievement of God's purpose respecting man. By such faith men come into moral fellowship with the living Christ; and by his life they attain unto righteousness and are saved from wrath. The death of Jesus is revelatory. The life of Jesus is dynamic. That death furnishes a demonstration of God's attitude toward men on the basis of which they who by faith partake of his life may be reconciled to God.

Pursuing still the plan of interpreting the less clear passages by those which are more clear, we come to the obscure but unquestionably important statement of the apostle Paul in Gal. 3:13, 14:

> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse for us;—for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree;—that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

That the apostle employs the term "law" in this sentence in its legalistic sense, i. e., as denoting not the total revelation of the divine will, or the legislative portion of the Old Testament, but the strictly legalistic element of the Old Testament revelation, is a fact of fundamental importance for the discovery of his thought in

this passage. That such is in fact the meaning of the word here even a study of the word as used repeatedly in this chapter of the epistle will make reasonably clear. Observe, for example, the antithesis in which the apostle sets the dictum of the law in vs. 10 and the Scripture doctrine of faith in vs. 11. Both are derived from the Old Testament, yet they directly contradict one another, and the apostle clearly regards the latter as that which is really revelatory of God's attitude toward men. Observe also the apostle's declaration in vs. 17, that the law cannot set aside the principle of faith that underlies the promise made long before to Abraham.[1] Law is in this sense, according to Paul's thought, an element of the divine revelation, but neither the whole of that revelation, nor its controlling element. It was just here that Paul differed from those pharisaically inclined thinkers whom he was opposing. They made law, in its strictly legalistic sense, the whole or the determinative element of the divine revelation. To Paul it was a subordinate element of revelation, and the exaltation of it to

[1] For fuller discussion of the usage of the word "law" in Paul and a detailed interpretation of Gal. 3:13, 14, see Burton, "Redemption from the Curse of the Law," *American Journal of Theology*, Vol. XI (October, 1907), pp. 624–46.

the supreme place was an utter misrepresentation of God and a perversion of religion.

When it is clearly recognized in what sense Paul is using this term "law," then it follows that by "the curse of the law" he does not mean a curse which God veritably pronounces on everyone "who continues not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them," for, as vss. 10, 11 clearly show, he holds that the Old Testament itself affirms quite a different basis as that of the divine judgment. This curse is rather that which is pronounced by the purely legal element of the Old Testament when isolated and set off by itself. Such a declaration is not false. It has its value as disclosing to men where they stand when judged purely on the basis of their conduct, and is especially calculated to deter Paul's readers from adopting the legalistic view of his opponents, since on such a basis there could be for them only a curse for their non-conformity to all the statutes of the law. But they greatly err, the apostle clearly indicates, who think that such a curse of law truly represents God's attitude to men. He desires mercy and not sacrifice. Faith wins his approval, and for him who has faith there is no divine curse even

though he has not fulfilled all the law's detailed requirements.

From this it follows further that redemption from the curse of the law is not forgiveness of sins, but deliverance of the mind from a misconception of God's attitude toward men. From the curse that God pronounces, only in the sense that in the law-element of his revelation he discloses to us our shortcomings, pointing out that judged on the basis of our own conduct we are indeed under a curse—from this curse which never expressed God's thought in full, which taken alone utterly misrepresents the attitude of God to men, men are redeemed when they learn at length, what the prophets perpetually affirmed, that God is not a bookkeeper, recording in his ledger the daily deeds of men and issuing his curse on those who fail in any requirement of the law, but a righteous God, loving righteousness in men, and faith by which men come into fellowship with him.

Precisely how the apostle conceived that this redemption from a degrading and enslaving conception of God, Jesus wrought for us in that he died on the cross, he has not here clearly indicated, and it may not be possible for us with certainty to affirm. Yet there are two possible

answers to this question which are suggested by the apostle's language elsewhere, and which are sufficient to account for the language of the present passage without the necessity of resorting to explanations which have no basis in his expressed thought. It is beyond question that the apostle looked upon the death of Jesus as a disclosure and demonstration of God's love for men.[1] This thought alone may be the basis of his expression here. That God loves men, even sinful men, his enemies, as the death of Christ shows that he does love them, is itself a refutation of the conception that he is a mere legalistic judge of men, ignoring their striving, their aspiration, and their faith, and pronouncing on them a curse because they have failed to fulfil all the requirements of the law. But it is probable that this thought of the divine love, if it underlay the language of the apostle at this point, was supplemented in his mind by another, for it is beyond question that the apostle believed that Jesus himself was without sin (II Cor. 5:21). If then even he endured the cross, the climax of suffering and the extreme symbol of divine displeasure, it cannot be that it is the law of the divine government that each

[1] See Rom. 5:9, 10; 8:31, and cf. pp. 165 ff.

is dealt with on principles of legalistic justice. Look, you who think that God awards to each that joy or that pain which his punctilious fulfilment of statutes or his failure to fulfil them deserves; look at the cross of Christ, where he, the righteous, who knew no sin, died on the tree of cursing, *for us*, who had fallen far short of meeting the law's demands; and learn how widely you have missed the truth concerning God's real attitude toward men. There is certainly no more need here than in Rom. 3:24–26 to suppose that Paul thinks of Christ as veritably the object of divine displeasure, or as enduring a penalty transferred from sinful men to himself. That he suffers because of sin and on behalf of men has its sufficient explanation in his relation to God and to men, in consequence of which the pain of their sin falls on him. And that he who is the revealer and revelation of God does thus suffer itself disproves the whole legalistic conception of God.

Thus it appears that if we are guided by the apostle's own usage of words, and if we interpret his less clear assertions by those that are more clear, we find him thinking of the death of Jesus as vicarious in the sense that it is endured for the sake of men, as revelatory in that

it discloses to men God's true attitude toward them, and as redemptive through the fact that it is thus revelatory. It is by the knowledge of God that men are redeemed; only of course such redemption becomes actual only as men accept and act upon the revelation of God thus given in Christ.

From this passage it is natural to turn to one in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians:

> For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we judge this: that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all that they who live might no longer live to themselves but to him that for them died and rose. . . . . All things are from God that reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their transgressions; and committed to us the word of reconciliation. On behalf of Christ therefore we are ambassadors, as if God were entreating you through us. We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become righteousness of God in him (II Cor. 5:14, 15, 18–21).

Concerning this remarkable and remarkably interesting passage it must suffice to notice only those things which are strictly pertinent to our subject. Logically, if not also grammatically, the word "this" in vs. 14 is defined not by the

immediately succeeding clause, but by all that follows to the end of vs. 15. In the death of Jesus the apostle sees the supreme expression of the love of Christ, and holds that all, for whom he thus suffered, are potentially and ought to be actually participative in it. The death that he died is ours, both in that it was for us, and in that it belongs to us to enter into it and share it with him, living no longer for the fulfilment of our own purposes and ends but for his, who for us died and rose again. Thus to the oft-expressed thought that the death of Jesus is vicarious, on behalf of men, being an expression of his love for men, this passage adds that it is also representative, and of universal significance. It sets forth to men the ideal of their own life and appeals to them, moved by its manifestation of his love, to reproduce it in themselves. Similarly, in Rom. 6:10, 11, the apostle declares that as Jesus in his death died to sin, utterly and finally repudiating it, so we ought to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Both passages look at the death of Jesus as an act of profound moral significance, an act of righteousness on the part of Christ, mirroring for men their true attitude toward sin and righteousness. By its revelation of

ideal human life the death of Jesus becomes redemptive.

But the Corinthian passage also represents Jesus as the revelation of God, and as in that revelation working atonement. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. The addition of the words, "not imputing their transgressions unto them," combined with lexicographical evidence not necessary to be cited here, shows that it is the laying-aside of divine wrath rather than the overcoming of human hostility that the apostle has specially in mind when he speaks of the reconciliation of the world to God. This reconciliation is accomplished through the revelation of God in Christ; whether by a demonstration of his righteous hostility to sin (cf. Rom. 3:25 f.) or of his love (Rom. 5:8 f.) or through both, the passage does not clearly indicate. The most noteworthy fact is that it is through revelation that atonement is effected.

But this passage further presents Jesus—and we can scarcely be wrong in thinking that the apostle has specially in mind the death of Jesus —in yet a third aspect. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf." It requires no argument to show that the expression "made

to be sin" involves metonymy. To make a person to be sin, and that one become righteousness, are both alike impossible and unthinkable in a literal sense of the words. But it is almost as clear that the metonymy is double; that is, that the words do not mean that he made him sinful, caused him to sin. Such an idea is so far removed alike from Paul's idea of Jesus and of God as to be an impossible interpretation of his language. He can only mean that God made him to experience the effect of sin; not his own, for he had none, but that of others. The thought is clearly akin to that of Gal. 3:13. There is the same antithetical form of expression and the same kind of metonymy. That men might in him enter into the divine righteousness (whether in the strictly ethical sense, or in the forensic sense, is not needful to decide at this point) he entered into the experience of human sin, not indeed by sinning, but by suffering even unto death, because of that sin. How such experience of sin enabled men to enter into the divine righteousness, the sentence itself leaves unsaid; but the most obvious suggestion of the context is that it was through the revelation of God that was thus made.

Two passages from the epistle to the Philippians, worthy in themselves of extended study, must be briefly considered:

> And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, becoming obedient (to God) unto death, and that a death on the cross (Phil. 2:8).

> That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death, if so be I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10, 11).

These passages have in common the thought, intimated also in the earlier letters, that in his death Jesus is a pattern for his followers. For the first occurs in that remarkable statement concerning the self-abnegation of Christ, which is introduced by the words, "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus." And the second is part of the expression of the apostle's fervent longing after the achievement of that for which he had forsaken all and turned to Christ. The former passage affirms more explicitly than any previous one that Jesus in his death was obediently fulfilling the will of God, and goes on to add that for this God highly exalted him. It yields decisive disproof, if any were needed, that the apostle conceived of Jesus as being in his death in any sense the

veritable object of divine wrath. The second passage, joining together the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering as both alike to be experienced by the Christian and as alike conditions precedent to his own participation in the resurrection, confirms what Rom. 4:25 and 5:10 not obscurely suggest, that the final achievement of divine approval is attained not through any sacrifice of Christ as a fact external to the redeemed, or by faith as an enacted condition precedent to the ascription to the believer of an achieved merit of Christ, or by both of these combined, but by the dynamic of fellowship with Christ in that moral experience of which his death was the culmination. In that he died he died once for all to sin. In that he liveth he liveth unto God. This experience in all its essential moral elements must be repeated in him who is to attain unto atonement, i. e., reconciliation with God, and the sequel of it, resurrection from the dead. That men might through him learn to know God and repeat in themselves this experience, for this Jesus, for love of men and on their behalf, was obedient even unto death, even that of the cross.

It is scarcely necessary to proceed farther in

the interpretation of what we have called the earlier Pauline epistles. Such passages as I Thess. 1:10; 4:14; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 4:25; 6:4 ff.; 8:3, etc., though raising many questions of detail, do but repeat, for the most part in less explicit form, the conception found in those which we have already examined.

No doubt the apostle often expresses his thought in language shaped by the current legalistic ideas or by his own formerly held, but now for the most part abandoned, legalistic conceptions. Yet when that language is carefully examined it yields a conception of the work of Christ in the reconciliation of God with men, which is ethical rather than legalistic. The fundamental significance of the death of Jesus as Paul conceives of it, is in the revelation which it effects. It reveals the love of God for men, and the righteousness of God, especially in its aspect of hostility to sin. This revelation of God, which makes manifest his essentially ethical character and attitude toward men, emancipates men from false ideas of God and provides a basis on which they may be freely forgiven by God. Yet this is only on condition of faith—and that too not arbitrarily, or as if faith were a quantitative complement of an

expiation for sin effected through the death of Jesus, but on the ethical ground that the judgments of God are according to truth and God can approve as righteous only those who are fundamentally righteous. Approaching it from another point of view the death of Jesus reveals the ideal of human life. It is itself a moral act wherein is disclosed Jesus' own attitude to sin and the attitude which it belongs to all men to take. He who by faith in him accepts his principle of life enters into fellowship with him who died and rose again, dying with him to sin and rising with him to newness of life. They are reconciled to God and obtain divine approval who, accepting the revelation of God which, begun in ages past, reached its culmination in Jesus Christ, commit themselves in faith to him and become partakers of the life that was, and is, in him.

The letters to the Colossians and Ephesians[1] affirm the pre-existence and pre-incarnate activity of the Christ and his function in creation

[1] Were it possible to discriminate with certainty between the Pauline and the later non-Pauline elements in those letters and the pastoral epistles, the non-Pauline would of course call for separate treatment. But in view of the difficulty of doing this, and in the interest of proper proportion of treatment, the wise course seems to be that which we have chosen, viz., to treat first

and pre-Christian revelation with a clearness and emphasis not found in the earlier letters, and attach to his redemptive work a cosmic significance hardly expressed at all in them. But these differences affect but slightly their doctrine of atonement. Nor do the pastoral epistles, whatever their authorship, depart in any important way from the teaching of the unquestionably Pauline letters on this subject. In the interest of brevity, therefore, we may summarize the teaching of all these letters in one series of statements, indicating by the references which of the several elements are expressed in the several letters.

The Gentiles were before the coming of Christ and, apart from their acceptance of Christ, remain alienated from God by evil works, hostile to him, and objects of his wrath because of their sin. The Jews also were by nature children of wrath even as the rest (Col. 1:21; 2:13; 3:7; Eph. 2:3; I Tim. 1:13–16).

the quite certainly Pauline literature and then those which are open to doubt and in any case later. II Thessalonians, which if genuine is early, is passed over as making no addition to the teaching of the more certainly genuine epistles. I cannot myself feel that the doubts respecting Colossians are justified. Ephesians is less certain, but this also seems to me more likely to be Paul's than not. The pastoral epistles seem pretty certainly compounded of Pauline and non-Pauline elements.

Yet men were at the same time, even in their sin, the objects of God's love. He was rich in mercy and loved us with a great love. The salvation of men is the work of divine grace; it is he that delivered us out of the power of darkness (Col. 1:13; 2:2, 3; Eph. 1:7; 2:4, 8; Tit. 3:4 ff.).

Jesus, himself the object of divine love, is also himself full of love for men. He is the Son of God's love, and the revelation of the Father, loving men with a love that passes knowledge (Col. 1:13, 15, 19; Eph. 2:4; 3:19).

The death of Jesus was an act of love on his part which was at the same time well pleasing unto God (Eph. 5:2,[1] 25; cf. I Tim. 2:5, 6; Tit. 2:14). By this death the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has been broken down. The bond written in ordinances has been blotted out and the believer in Christ is no longer subject to judgment in meat or drink or feast days or Sabbath days. They who were once afar off are made nigh in the blood of Christ, he having abolished in his flesh the law of commandments. Through the cross

[1] On this passage which is one of the few in which Paul uses sacrificial language, cf. T. K. Abbott, in the *International Critical Commentary*.

both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God (Col. 2:14–16; Eph. 2:13–22). But the purpose of Jesus' self-surrender to death is also stated in more personal and likewise in more distinctly ethical terms. He gave himself a ransom for all to redeem them from iniquity and to secure for them forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:20 f.; 2:13; Eph. 1:7; I Tim. 2:5, 6;[1] Tit. 2:14). All this is in essential agreement with the doctrine of the earlier epistles, that Jesus is in his blood propitiatory through faith, that in him there is redemption, that justified through his death we are saved through his life, and that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe. Only there is now a strong emphasis upon the last-named thought and consequently on the inter-racial significance of Jesus' death as abolishing the partition between Jew and gentile, both now having their access to God in the same way. It is important to observe that this result is achieved and the Gentiles come into possession of all the privileges of the Jews, not by their coming under the law, but by its abolition. Faith remains for all the sole condition of access to God, because Christ, in his death, blotted

[1] Cf. Mark 10:45, and chap. vi, pp. 113 ff.

out the bond written in ordinances, nailing it, as the apostle expresses it, to the cross. The sufferings of the Christ are complemented by those of the followers who fill up that which is lacking. The implication is that his suffering and theirs are of like significance.

Acceptance with God is achieved not by works of law (which has been abolished), but through faith and the dwelling of Christ in the heart. In him we have our redemption from iniquity, and the forgiveness of our sins. Christ in us is the hope of glory (Col. 1:23, 27; 2:7; Eph. 1:13; 2:8; 3:12; I Tim. 2:5, 6; Tit. 2:14).

Finally, the death of Jesus not only has relation to the Jews and Gentiles; it is of cosmic significance. Through it, it is God's purpose to reconcile to him all things in heaven and earth (Col. 1:20; 2:15; Eph. 1:10).

Except therefore in emphasis, and in a not unimportant extension of horizon, the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians and the pastoral epistles, by whomsoever written, reflect a conception of the significance of Jesus' death and of the basis on which sinners may be reconciled to God which is essentially Pauline. In Jesus, God is so revealed to men that the ordinances

of the law are done away, and men, whether Jews or Gentiles, may enter into peace with God through faith in Christ, who dwelling in them is the hope of glory. Thus does the Father, because of the love wherewith he loved us, deliver us out of the power of darkness and translate us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

CHAPTER IX

THE TEACHING OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER AND OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The First Epistle of Peter is addressed to Christians who are suffering temptation and persecution, and is evidently designed to encourage those thus suffering to endure without surrender of their faith. For this purpose the writer appeals on the one side to the sufferings of Jesus and on the other to the salvation that is yet to be revealed. The wrath of God against sin and the basis of forgiveness are naturally enough but little spoken of. What is said is sufficient to indicate that the writer holds the common doctrine of early Christianity that the manner of life which was common among the Gentiles, having been handed down from their fathers, was displeasing to God, and made them objects of his wrath (1:18; 2:1; 3:12; 4:18). He refers also to faith as that through which salvation is obtained (1:5, 9) and through this salvation is conceived of as something not yet obtained, but to be received at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Yet it is also clearly set forth that

they who having believed now await this revelation of Christ and the accompanying salvation, have already purified their souls in their obedience to the truth (1:22) and are already the people of God (2:10), having been begotten through the word of God (1:23) unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1:3).

The single incidental reference to sacrifice[1] is significant as indicating that the writer thinks of the sacrifice of the Levitical system as displaced by the self-devotion of Christians to God, in which they are at the same time priests and offering, not slain but living, an offering which becomes acceptable through Jesus Christ, i. e., apparently through the fact of their spiritual fellowship with and likeness to Jesus Christ (cf. vs. 15).

Of the passages that speak of the sufferings of Jesus none is more clear or important than 2:21–25:

For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not

[1] "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5; cf. Rom. 12:1).

again; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

It is worthy of notice, first of all, that there are four expressions in this passage which are taken substantially from Isa., chap. 53, and follow almost literally the Septuagint version: "He did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth;" "Who himself bare our sins;" "By whose stripes ye are healed;" "As sheep were going astray." The use of these expressions, combined with the evidence of 1:11,[1] leaves no room for doubt that the writer regarded the Isaiah passage as predictive and as fulfilled in Jesus. The two passages are complementary, one declaring that the prophets foretold the sufferings of Christ but without naming the passages, and the other applying to Jesus, in respect to his sufferings, the language of Isa., chap. 53, but without expressly saying that the language was predict-

[1] "Of which salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently, ... searching what time or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did point to when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ."

ive. There can be no doubt that the writer included Isa., chap. 53, among the passages which he understood to be definite predictions of the suffering of Jesus. What other passages he included in the same list we do not know.

But it is also clear that our author thought of the death of Jesus as having relation not simply to the men of his own generation but to all the human race, even to men whom he characterizes expressly as not contemporaries of Christ, but as Gentiles of another generation, having, therefore, nothing directly to do with the death of Jesus, for he says, "He bore *our* sins on the tree." "By his stripes *ye* are healed." The death of Jesus was in fulfilment of the divine plan and prophetic announcement, and was of universal significance. He suffered for our sins once for all (3:18).

The purpose of Jesus' sufferings is affirmed to be that we, having died unto sin, might live unto righteousness. This language reminds us strongly of that of Paul in Rom. 6:10, 13; "In that he died, he died unto sin once for all, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God. . . . . Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead and your

members as instruments of righteousness unto God." How the sufferings of Jesus under sin, wherein he bore our sins in his body on the tree, are to achieve the result that we should die to sin and live to righteousness—on this point the writer is silent, as Paul also is on the similar point in Rom., chap. 3. But it is clear that our writer has in mind a moral reformation or regeneration as the result aimed at in the sufferings of Christ. This is made most clear by the twenty-fifth verse in which he interprets the words, "by whose stripes ye were healed." "For," he adds, "ye were going astray like sheep, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls." The healing through his stripes is accomplished in their return from their wanderings to God as their shepherd and bishop. That the sufferings of Jesus are looked at from the point of view of their moral effect on men is further made clear from the fact that in them Jesus left us an example that we should follow in his footsteps. The context makes it clear that that in which the writer means to hold up to his readers the example of Jesus for their imitation is his patient suffering, innocently, not for any sin of his own, but for that of others. Thus as in Jesus and in Paul, so also in Peter

we find the sufferings of Jesus brought under a general moral law. Vicariousness, the suffering of the innocent for the guilty, this is the law of righteous living. In this Jesus has set us a great example which we should follow. But it is not simply a necessity to which we ought to submit; it has redemptive value. He suffered that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness, that we who were going astray might return unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls. Such also is to be the effect of like conduct on the part of Jesus' followers. They who speak against you as evil-doers will by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (2:12). Ungodly husbands, even if they obey not the word, may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives (3:1). Wherein ye are spoken against, they will be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ (3:16, cf. vss. 17, 18, with the reference to the sufferings of Christ).

To the thought of this passage, the four others in which the sufferings of Jesus are spoken of add little that is significant for our purpose except emphasis.

In 3:18, having urged his readers to suffer willingly for well-doing, because it is better,

if the will of God be so, to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing, he adds, "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit."

In 4:1 the author seems to follow the thought of Paul in Rom., chap. 6, more closely than in 2:21–25. Exhorting his readers to have the same mind in them that was in Jesus, he adds, using language which he had just above applied to Jesus, but which he evidently means here shall apply both to Jesus and to all who follow in his steps, "For he that suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

In 4:12, 13, he bids his readers not to be surprised at the fiery trial that is coming upon them, but, inasmuch as they are partakers of Christ's sufferings, to rejoice.

In 5:1, the writer refers to himself as a witness of the sufferings of Christ, but without entering into the question of their significance.

In two passages the writer speaks of the blood of Christ:

> Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood,

as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, (even the blood) of Christ (I Pet. 1:18, 19).

The most notable fact about this passage is that the redemption is not from the penalty or punishment of sin, but from the vain manner of life handed down from the fathers. How this is effected by the blood, i. e., the death of Christ, can hardly be doubted in view on the one side of the comparison of Jesus with a lamb without blemish or spot, and on the other of the repeated reference in the epistle to the suffering of Jesus as the suffering of the righteous for the unrighteous, yet also as a death to sin in which the followers of Jesus become participators. Entering into spiritual fellowship with Jesus in his death, they are delivered from the vain and sinful life they would otherwise live.

In the salutation of the letter the writer addresses his readers as elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (1:2), conveying, no doubt, in the word "sprinkling" an allusion to the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and so, by implication, ascribing to the death of Jesus the atoning value. But into the question how it atones, the passage does not at all enter.

It thus appears that the writer of this epistle conceived of the sufferings and death of Jesus as (*a*) predicted by the prophets, in particular by Isa., chap. 53; (*b*) as vicarious, the suffering of the righteous for the unrighteous; (*c*) as having relation not simply to Jesus' contemporaries, but to all men; (*d*) as having as its purpose the redemption of men from the evil manner of life which their ancestors followed; (*e*) as falling under a general principle applicable to all and setting an example which his followers should follow and in the following of which they would in their measure achieve results like those which Jesus himself achieved.

For those of us who have always read Isa., chap. 53, as expressive of the idea that the servant of Jehovah endures the penalty of other men's sins transferred to him, thus making expiation for them, and who find this language quoted in I Peter as applicable to Jesus and indeed uttered predictively of him, it is natural perhaps to assume that the author looked upon the death of Jesus as substitutionarily expiative. But not only does he not say this; what he does say practically excludes it. We may not indeed make too much of the fact that some of the best modern interpreters do not find the idea of

substitution in the strict sense in the Isaiah passage; for we cannot assume that our author was in agreement with these particular modern interpreters. But it is pertinent to point out that the whole intent of his references to the death of Jesus is to urge first that the purpose of Jesus' death is that men having died to sin might live to righteousness, and especially to exhort them to follow his example, suffering patiently not for ill-doing, but for well-doing. Unless therefore we are prepared to ascribe to our author a thought about the death of Jesus which he does not at all express, and which is out of harmony with what he does say, we must abide by the thought that the death of Jesus fulfils a divine purpose and has universal significance in its revelation of the principle that it is the duty and privilege of the righteous to suffer innocently for the wicked, and by such suffering to win them to righteousness. Indeed we thus somewhat understate the fact. For since we know what significance the writer attached to the suffering of Jesus' followers (2:12; 3:1, 6, etc.), and since he expressly classes together the sufferings of Jesus and his followers, it is practically demanded of us that we give to the sufferings of Jesus a like meaning

to that which our author expressly ascribes to those of his followers.

We conclude, therefore, that the author of the First Epistle of Peter is in harmony with most other New Testament writers in finding the fundamental value of the death of Jesus in the sphere of revelation, but that he lays especial emphasis on the vicarious sufferings of Jesus as setting an example which his followers ought to follow and by the following of which they may work results akin to those which Jesus himself accomplished in his death.

The purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to maintain the finality and perfection of the revelation made in Jesus and of the way of salvation revealed through him. It maintains this proposition in large part by setting forth the superiority of Jesus and the new covenant to the several corresponding elements of the Old Testament religion. Throughout the argument the validity of the old is not denied, but rather insisted upon. But upon the basis of such validity the superiority and finality of the new is maintained.

Such an argument might be addressed either to men who held fast to the old and were unwilling to surrender it in order to accept the new,

or to men who, having regarded the new as a mere addition to the old, in no way modifying it, and, seeing the old about to perish, were tempted to give up their faith in God, surrendering old and new together. The total evidence of the letter makes it clear that it is in fact addressed to men of the latter class. The danger which threatens them, and which the letter seeks to ward off, is not a return of Christians who have abandoned Judaism to that Judaism, but a total loss of faith in God on the part of men to whom the perishing of the old was practically a perishing of the whole.

To such men the writer comes reaffirming the validity of past revelation, but contending that the passing-away of the old in no way justifies surrender of faith in God, for, in place of the old, God has already provided in Jesus that which is better, the final and permanent.

As in Paul, so in this epistle, the sin that is condemned, perhaps we should rather say that in sin which makes it the object of divine wrath, is resistance to truth, an evil heart of unbelief. It is the drifting-away from the message of the gospel against which the writer warns his readers especially. It is they who have tasted the good word of God and then fallen away whom it is

impossible again and again to renew unto repentance. It is those who sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth for whom there remains only a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. The unforgivable sin is the neglect of truth of which men have already had apprehension (2:1–3; 3:12–19; 4:11; 6:4–6; 10:26–30).

To quote all that the writer has to say concerning the significance of sacrifice would involve the quotation of the major portion of 7:26—10:31. A reference to this portion of the epistle will make it clear that in the thought of the writer the sacrifices of the old covenant were themselves valid only unto cleanness of the flesh, and were never able to cleanse the consciences of men. It is impossible, he says, that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. This system of sacrifices, which is but a shadow of the true, has been done away in the establishment of the new covenant in Christ. It is most important to observe that while the writer regards the sacrifices as divinely appointed, he does not think of them as ever having validity for the actual cleansing of the conscience or the securing of forgiveness. They

achieved only the cleansing of the flesh, and symbolized the real cleansing of the soul and foreshadowed the real cleansing of conscience which was to take place through Christ.

In the ninth chapter he refers to the covenant spoken of in Exod. 24:7, to which, as we have judged, there is also reference in the language of Jesus in connection with the Last Supper. The word διαθήκη which he uses in this connection has been the occasion of much perplexity and its ambiguity has probably led to a general misinterpretation of the passage. The revised version reads:

> And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is (notice that the word is the same that is above translated covenant) there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death, for doth it ever avail where he that made it liveth?

If this is the correct translation the writer has apparently played fast and loose with the ambiguous word διαθήκη, using it first in the sense of covenant, and then proving concerning it as a covenant things which can be proved only

by taking it in the sense of testament, will. But it is quite possible that this translation and the suggested interpretation misrepresent the writer's thought, and that he intended rather to speak of a covenant throughout. The passage may be read as follows:

> And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for redemption of the transgressions that have relation to the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a covenant it is necessary that a death should be offered, for a covenant is valid in respect to dead men (where there has been death), since doth it then have force when he that made it liveth?

If this is the correct translation then the writer has retained the same sense of διαθήκη, and has interpreted the slaying of the animal in connection with the covenant as signifying the death of the maker, or since the term is probably generic, the makers of the covenant. In this case the underlying thought is that in the making of a covenant the parties to it signified that they died and thus cut off all relationship to their past lives. The revocation of the covenant is therefore impossible, for the men who made it are dead and cannot revoke the act by which it was made. This interpretation, which

is substantially that of Westcott and of Rendall, avoids ascribing to the author an argument the whole force of which, depending upon the ambiguous meaning of a word, is of course in itself entirely invalid. But its significance for our present purpose is as showing that the writer looked upon the death of the sacrificial animal in connection with the ratification of the covenant as a purely symbolic act intended to set forth the irrevocability of the covenant. If the more common interpretation be adopted the inconsequentialness of the argument itself makes it impossible for us to discover any significance in the fact of the death of the sacrifice. But aside from this somewhat obscure passage it is clear that the writer of the epistle ascribes to the ancient sacrifices only symbolic and foreshadowing significance.

It forms no part of the author's purpose to set forth explicitly a doctrine of forgiveness or of justification. Yet he is in no doubt as to his thought. As unbelief, inhospitality to truth, is the great and fundamental sin, so faith is the condition of salvation. Among the first principles of Christ he names first repentance from dead works, and faith toward God (6:1). It is they who have faith who enter into the

divine rest (4:3). He has confidence that his readers are those who have faith unto the saving of the soul (10:39). Indeed the whole purpose of the letter may be stated to be to exhort and persuade those to whom it is written to maintain their faith steadfast to the end. The entire eleventh chapter is devoted to the setting-forth of the examples of faith in the Old Testament. As is natural under the circumstances the element of persistent endurance even in suffering, is emphasized in the presentation of faith and following this eleventh chapter the author exhorts his readers to lay aside their easily besetting sin, by which he doubtless means unbelief, and to run with patience the race which was set before them, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of their faith. The author is but expressing the same thought in other words when in the eighth and tenth chapters he describes it as the mission of Jesus to bring in a better covenant, and in language taken from Jeremiah describes that covenant in the words, "I will put my laws into their mind and on their heart also will I write them. And I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their iniquities and their sins will I remember no more." The new

covenant is a covenant of forgiveness of the sins of those on whose heart the law of God is written. This is, of course, the old familiar doctrine of the prophets set forth not only by Jeremiah in the passage which the author is quoting, but by Isaiah in the words, "Wash you, make you clean; put away your evil doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well. . . . . Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

To deal adequately with the sufferings and death of Jesus as set forth by our author would require a careful exposition of a long list of passages (Heb. 2:9, 10; 2:14; 5:7–9; 7:25; 7:26, 27; 9:11–28; 10:10; 10:19–22; 12:24; 13:12; 13:20). This would in turn demand an exposition of almost the whole epistle. Limitations of space excluding this, we must content ourselves with an articulated summary of the teachings of the epistle concerning the significance of the death of Jesus.

1. The sufferings of Jesus are the means by which he learned obedience and was made perfect, as is fitting for one who is to be the author of salvation to men (2:10; 5:7). The conception of suffering is intimately bound up with that

of incarnation itself. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same. . . . . For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren. . . . . For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted" (2:14–18).

2. Having thus been made perfect through suffering, he becomes the author of salvation to those that obey him (5:9), having obtained eternal redemption (9:12).

3. In his death he bears the sins of many. He was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (9:26, 28). He offered himself once for all for the sins of the people (7:27).

4. In this offering of himself he is both priest and offering, and by the perfection of his priesthood and of his offering he does away with all previously prescribed sacrifices.

5. Whereas the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sanctified only unto the cleanness of the flesh, the blood of Christ cleanses the consciences of men from dead works to serve the living God (9:13, 14; 10:22).

6. He becomes the mediator of a new cove-

nant, and his blood is the blood of the new covenant with God. As in the ratification of the old covenant a death takes place symbolizing the irrevocability of that covenant, so in the new covenant there is likewise a death, and the covenant is ratified with blood.

7. The new covenant differs from the old, however, fundamentally in this, that whereas in the old covenant the laws of God which the people covenanted to keep were external, written upon stone; in the new covenant they are put into their minds and written upon their hearts. The covenant is one of ethical relationship between God and man in accordance with which the will of God is written upon the hearts of men, and he forgives their sins.

The relation of these various thoughts which the writer gathers about the death of Jesus to one another and to the conception of atonement for sin is not transparently clear. For us the thought is obscured by the fact that the writer's controlling motive is to show that to every significant element of the old régime there is a corresponding element in the life and work of Jesus, that the new is in every case superior to the old, and that it authoritatively displaces the old. From this point of view it is not necessary that

he should expound the significance of each of the several elements of the old system to which he finds a parallel in the life and work of Jesus; it is enough that for each element of the old there is a parallel element in the new which is superior to the old and displaces it.

Nevertheless there is certainly a clue to the writer's thought in the fact that he expressly finds the basis of fellowship between God and man in the new covenant of which Jesus is the mediator, and which involves on man's part an attitude of faith and the law written upon the heart. When to this we add the thought repeatedly expressed in various forms that Jesus makes propitiation for the sins of the people, that his blood cleanses the conscience from dead works, and that his blood is the blood of the new covenant, and that he was manifested to take away sins; when we add to this also that in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted, and that having learned obedience by the things that he suffered he becomes to them that obey him the author of salvation, we seem to have the elements, only partially co-ordinated to be sure, but still the elements, of the doctrine that men are brought into reconciliation with God

through a faith in Jesus Christ which makes them partakers of his achieved virtue, that virtue which he achieved in his sufferings through the shedding of his blood. Thus he becomes the mediator of a better covenant because there is thus written upon the hearts of men that law of God to which he learned obedience, and to which they also become obedient by that fellowship with him into which they enter by faith.

It must be granted that there is a certain element of hypothesis in this reconstruction of the writer's doctrine of atonement. He has nowhere set it forth thus organized. His doctrine is in a certain sense of the word formal; this, namely, that what the sacrifices of the old system and the priests of the old régime never could do, but could only symbolize and shadow forth, that Jesus veritably did. How he did, it does not primarily concern him to explain. For his readers his purpose is accomplished if he can convince them that in the perishing of that old régime God has not forsaken his people. Nor is there reason to abandon all faith in God, for the old has at once vindicated itself as divine and branded itself as obsolete, in that its types and prophecies, themselves ineffectual save as

types and prophecies, have found perfect fulfilment in the life and work of Christ. To discover in the epistle a positive content for the writer's doctrine of atonement one must depend in no small part upon his incidental references to the significance of Christ's work. Other combinations and interpretations of these incidental references may perhaps be possible, but that which seems most fully to account for them is the interpretation above suggested, in brief this: Men are reconciled to God when through faith in Jesus they appropriate from him that attitude of faith in and obedience toward God which he exemplified when, learning obedience through the things that he suffered, he shed his blood that he might bring men to God.

We may then sum up the teaching of the epistle as a whole in these propositions:

1. It is resistance to truth, an evil heart of unbelief, especially sinning wilfully after one has received the knowledge of the truth and become partaker of Christ, that incurs the divine displeasure.

2. Sacrifice has no power to cleanse the conscience. Once valuable for the cleansing of the flesh and as a symbol of spiritual cleansing, it has now been wholly superseded and set aside.

3. The sufferings of Jesus are of significance (*a*) as perfecting the character of Jesus, (*b*) as taking the place of all temple sacrifice, (*c*) in that in his death he bears the sin of many, and (*g*) becomes the mediator of a new covenant.

4. Men become acceptable to God by the entrance into the new covenant of which Jesus is the mediator, whereby the law of God is written on their hearts. Atonement is through Jesus in that it is through faith in him that they become partakers in the new covenant.

It is not wholly clear whether the author was content to ascribe to Jesus the more perfect fulfilment of all that the ritual system represented, and the effectual accomplishment of all that it symbolized without distinctly defining to himself how he did this or the relation between the death of Jesus and the forgiveness of sin, or whether he conceived that Jesus became the mediator of a new covenant through the impartation to men of that spirit which he manifested in giving his life for men and the consequent creation of character acceptable to God. What is clear is on the one side that he regarded Jesus as taking up into himself

and superseding the system of priestly sacrifice, and on the other that he conceived of atonement as accomplished through transformation of character by faith.

CHAPTER X

ATONEMENT IN THE WRITINGS ASCRIBED TO JOHN

It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to enter into the question of the authorship and date of the Fourth Gospel, the epistles commonly called John's, and the Apocalypse. It is assumed, though without attempt to argue the case, first, that all these writings are among the later of the New Testament books, and hence call for consideration at about this point, and, secondly, that the gospel and first epistle proceed from the same author, or at least from the same school of thought, and that therefore what they severally have to say about atonement may be considered together. The ideas of the book of Revelation about atonement must be treated separately, since it cannot be confidently affirmed that this also is from the same school and period as the gospel and epistle. With the second and third epistles we need not concern ourselves, since they have nothing to say about atonement. The evidence of the gospel concerning the thought of John the Baptist and Jesus has already been considered.

That the author of the Gospel and First Epistle of John believed that there was alienation between God and men and hence need of atonement, is perfectly clear. "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (I John 5:19). "The wrath of God abideth on him who obeyeth not the Son" (John 3:36). "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar" (I John 5:10). The general term for the cause of this alienation is sin (I John 2:4; 15:17). The specific forms of sin most commonly spoken of are the hatred of one's brother, love of the world and the things that are in the world, and most especially rejection of Jesus, denial that he is the Christ, not believing the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son, not obeying the Son. The central condemnatory element in sin is the rejection of the light that God has given to men. "This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). This is identical with the doctrine of Paul that the wrath of God is against those who hold down the truth in iniquity.

The condition of forgiveness is very definitely stated in the first epistle. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth

is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:3, 9). The use of the two terms "faithful" and "righteous" to describe that in God which assures the forgiveness of the sinner and his cleansing from unrighteousness is of great significance. If with Westcott we join the word "faithful" with "forgive us our sins," and the word "righteous," with "cleanse us from all unrighteousness," the fidelity of God to his promises assures us of forgiveness, and his righteousness, his moral uprightness, involving hatred of sin and desire that men shall cease from sinning, carries with it the moral purification of the confessor. In that case there underlies the passage the thought, first, that God has promised to forgive him who confesses his sins to be sins, and so repudiates them, and that he will keep this promise, and, second, that God, loving righteousness and hating sin, will certainly avail himself of the confession of sin on the part of any sinner to cleanse that one from sin. If on the other hand the two predicates "faithful" and "righteous" are both related to both the consequent phrases, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, then both God's fidelity to his

promise and his righteousness, meaning his recognition of the moral status of men and his treatment of them in accordance with that status, involve both forgiveness and cleansing. Upon this interpretation which is perhaps the more probable one, it is involved in God's faithfulness and righteousness that he should recognize the changed moral status of one who confesses his sin, not continuing his disapproval and wrath toward one who is no longer purposing to sin, but approving and restoring to favor such a one, and accomplishing the moral cleansing which repentance makes possible. Thus, in Pauline phrase, the judgment of God is according to truth.

The converse and complement of this teaching is expressed in a later passage. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous" (I John 3:7). The assertion is evidently directed against those who continue in sin and justify themselves in so doing while still claiming to be children of God. The term "righteous" in the first clause must be taken as at least including the thought of acceptableness to God; for otherwise the sentence is mere tautology. He whose conduct is righteous, he only is righteous, approved of God. It is

indeed evidently one of the chief purposes of the epistle to insist upon this doctrine of the essentially ethical as well as religious character of the Christian life. There is no forgiveness of sins while we refuse to acknowledge our sins. There is no acceptance with God while we do not work righteousness. The righteousness of the Christian is not an attached or fictitious thing. All unrighteousness is sin, and he who professes to love God but hates his brother is a liar. "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." But he who confesses and repudiates his sin, he finds forgiveness.

That the epistle also teaches that sins are forgiven for his name's sake (2:12) in no way modifies this teaching. The pronoun "his" doubtless refers to God, who in 1:9 has been said to be faithful and righteous to forgive sins. The name stands for the character of God as there set forth, his faithfulness and righteousness. The meaning then is that because of his faithfulness and righteousness he has forgiven their sins. Confession of them is of course taken for granted and the passage in effect repeats the thought of 1:8, 9.[1]

[1] If, as some think, the pronoun refers to Christ, the expression is brachylogical, meaning, "Your sins are forgiven you because

The teaching of 5:16 of the epistle, "If a man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death," is twofold: that sin is forgivable, there is a sin that is not unto death; and that prayer avails to secure forgiveness for another. This, however, cannot be taken to exclude those conditions of forgiveness either in the sinner or in the work of Christ which we elsewhere find clearly set forth by the writer.

The doctrine of this epistle is, then, that acceptance with God, reconciliation with him, is conditioned upon a change of life to righteousness, but that he who does by confession of his sin turn his back upon his sin is forgiven and enters upon a new life in which there is cleansing from all unrighteousness.

Thus far we have dealt with passages which speak of forgiveness without associating it with the sufferings of Jesus. It remains to examine those which indicate the writer's thought concerning the relation of Jesus to forgiveness of sin, and the meaning of his death. The follow-

you have believed in the name of the Son of God," i. e., accepted him as the Son of God. If this is the thought, the passage belongs below with those that speak of the relation of Jesus to forgiveness.

ing passages from the First Epistle call for consideration:

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1:7).

If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world (2:1, 2).

And ye know that he was manifested to take away sins (3:5).

Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (3:16).

Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (4:9–11).

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (5:5).

It is of course difficult to distinguish sharply between those elements of the gospel that are traceable to John the Baptist and to Jesus, and that which belongs to the later author. But account must be taken at least of such passages as these:

On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and

saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world! (1:29).

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged; he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God (3:16 ff.).

He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (3:36).

Again we must forego extended interpretation and endeavor to sum up the unmistakable elements of the writer's thought as expressed both in epistle and gospel.

1. The sending of Jesus into the world was an expression of the love of God for the world, and was for the salvation of the world. If God so loved us we ought also to love one another.

2. The death of Jesus was an expression of his own love for men, and an example to us that as he loved so also ought we to love, and be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren. This is in accordance with the teaching of Jesus himself that his death was in obedience to a principle which ought to rule in other men's lives also as in his.

3. Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of those who believe in him, and for the sins of the whole world. The necessity of propitiation for sins implies that sins have created alienation, that God is displeased with sinners, that they are objects of his wrath. It is the mission of Jesus Christ to remove this alienation and bring about reconciliation. Yet he does not do this by changing the disposition of God toward sinners. It is God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. It is God who sent his Son to be the propitiation for sins. In his love the Son is the expression of the Father's love for the sinful world. Nor does he become the propitiation for the sins of the world in that he provided some objectively available compensation for the sins of the world. For it is emphatically affirmed that they only are at peace with God, who do not deny but confess, and thereby repudiate, their sins, who love as God loves, who being born of God sin not, but work righteousness. We must understand therefore that he becomes propitiatory through the effecting of a moral change in those who become reconciled to God through him. And this view of the case is the more clearly seen to be that of the

writer, when we note that he says that the Son was manifested "to take away sins," the context making it clear that to take away sins is to cause them to cease. It is further confirmed by the statement that the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from sin. For while the blood undoubtedly conveys a reference to the death of Jesus in the sense that it designates his shed blood, yet alike the general usage of the Old Testament, in which blood is the symbol of life, and especially the language of the gospel in the sixth chapter, make it evident that the blood of Jesus is the symbol of his life, which may be imparted to, and appropriated by, those who believe in him, and who through such appropriation become like him in character, living by the same principle of life. This principle of life he disclosed pre-eminently in that he laid down his life for men. It is the principle of love, and in its exemplification he both revealed the love of God, for God is love, and the one principle by which all human lives should be lived.

It is worth observing that the epistle nowhere says that the death of Jesus is propitiatory. He is propitiatory and his death is vicarious. But the interpretation of these statements which

consistently accounts for them is that the death of Jesus is effective in that it discloses that principle of living which, being the principle of God's own life, must become the principle of human lives in order that they may be reconciled to God, and that it so reveals this principle that they who believe on the Son of God in whom it is revealed become partakers of his life.

It is from this point of view that we must understand the statement that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. The sentence refers not to the world in general, but to those who have confessed their sins and are living righteous lives. If such fall into sin, they have an advocate with the Father, their sin does not utterly separate them from God. The life of Jesus Christ the righteous with whom they have fellowship pleads for them. And he is the propitiation for their sins, and not for theirs only, but for any who will come into life-relationship with him.

From this point of view also it becomes evident that the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," may mean for the gospel writer, Behold the innocent

one, who will suffer not for his own sin but for that of others, and who suffering thus will win men from their sin, thus causing sins to cease. This meaning which we judged to be possible as an interpretation of the language, but impossible, in view of the synoptic testimony, to ascribe to John the Baptist (cf. chap. v, pp. 99 ff.) there is no inherent difficulty in ascribing to the author of the gospel.

The doctrine of the atonement taught by the writer of the Epistle and Gospel of John is, we conclude, this: that the sinner is reconciled to God through confessing his sins, believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and appropriating his spirit as manifested pre-eminently in his laying down his life on behalf of men.

It is not the immediate purpose of the Johannine Apocalypse to set forth either the cause of alienation between God and sinful men, or a doctrine of the basis of forgiveness. Yet it is clearly implied in many passages, both that there is such alienation and that reconciliation is possible. The present discussion is limited to the consideration of this latter matter and the relation of Jesus to it, i. e., to atonement and the part which Jesus has in it.

The passages that specially call for consideration are the following:

And he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty (1:6–8).

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing (5:6, 9, 12).

And they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand? (6:16, 17).

And I said unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14).

If any man hath an ear, let him hear (13:9).

And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, to be the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb (14:1–4).

These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful (17:14).

Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they who are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:7–9).

These passages repeatedly speak of the Lamb that was slain, or that stood as having been slain. There can be no doubt that this is a title for Jesus Christ. For it is of Jesus Christ specifically that it is said in 1:6, that he "loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood," and to the Lamb it is said in 5:9, "For thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with thy

blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." By his blood, therefore, meaning his blood shed in his death, it is taught that Jesus redeemed men from their sins. The thought and phraseology are similar to the language of Paul in Rom. 3:24 f., "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth . . . . in his blood;" and still more to that of I Peter 1:18, "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, *even the blood* of Christ." Which of the two ideas of redemption, that of Romans, which is probably redemption from the condemnation of sin, or that of I Peter, which is clearly redemption from an evil life, the apocalyptist has in mind is not perfectly clear. Nor is it wholly clear how Jesus' death accomplishes redemption. The explanation is possibly to be found in 7:14, "These are they which come out of the great tribulation; and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This language seems clearly to refer to a moral purification, and if the washing is thought of as taking place

in the blood of the Lamb, this can scarcely be other than a highly figurative expression for moral purification through the all-cleansing influence of that moral life of the Christ which he manifested in his death.[1] That the cleansed robes are the symbol of righteous character is made quite clear from 19:7–9, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

One other aspect of the conception of the Lamb also deserves mention. When the sixth seal is opened the wicked say to the rocks and to the mountains, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day

[1] Weiss thinks that "in the blood" denotes not the element in which the washing takes place, but that through which those who come out of the great tribulation were enabled to cleanse their robes, the cleansing itself taking place in their martyrdom. In substantiation of this view, Weiss appeals to 12:11, "And they overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life even unto death." In this latter passage clearly, and if it furnishes the clue to the interpretation of the former, then in that also, the martyrs win their victory, cleanse their robes, through the influence of the shed blood of Jesus, that is, through participating in that spirit with which he also endured the cross.

of their wrath is come" (6:16, 17). And in the great judgment those who were not written in the book of life (elsewhere called the Lamb's book of life) were cast into the lake of fire.

It thus appears that in the thought of the apocalyptist:

1. Those who sin are punished. They are objects of the wrath of the Lamb.

2. They who have been cleansed from sin, whose robes are clean, being of the fine linen of righteous acts, become the bride of the Lamb.

3. Men are cleansed from sin, their robes are washed, they are purchased unto God to be his people, they overcome Satan because of (or through) the blood of the Lamb that was slain; and by this is meant, apparently, through participation on their part in that moral life, that attitude toward sin and the world, which Jesus manifested in laying down his life.

IV

SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHINGS CONCERNING ATONEMENT

BY

JOHN MERLIN POWIS SMITH

AND

ERNEST DEWITT BURTON

CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHINGS

The previous chapters have presented in rapid survey the thought concerning atonement as held in the successive periods of Old Testament history, in the period lying between the Old and New Testaments, and by the various teachers and writers of the New Testament. It remains now to summarize the results attained, to indicate the fundamental and enduring elements in the teaching as distinguished from the incidental and transitory, and to compare the teachings of the various periods one with another.

1. *Summary of the Old Testament doctrine.*— There is no uniform, persistent doctrine of atonement in the Old Testament. Each new age brought with it new ideas concerning God and sin. Change in these conceptions necessitated corresponding change in the formulation of the idea of atonement. The ever-widening experience of Israel forced the acceptance of changes in these great fundamental concepts of religion.

Certain phases of the idea of atonement were

developed under the stress of circumstances, answered the need of the age, and were left behind with the age to which they belonged, having no further function to perform in the new religious and social environment. Certain other elements of greater vitality survived all through the history, wielding more or less of influence upon the religious life of the nation. But whatever the fate of such subsidiary elements, the idea itself went on and increased in power. From a relatively unimportant place in the ritual of early times, it passed on to the stage where atonement apart from a specially created and elaborated atoning ritual was unthought of, and ended by dominating the whole ritual of the temple, so that the splendid constructions of the priestly legislation were all made to subserve the overwhelming need of reconciliation between God and his people. This thought filled the whole horizon of the later legislators.

Among those elements in the idea of atonement which faded out of Israel's consciousness, two were of special significance and prominence. The first is the view of the sacrifice or offering as a compensation to Jehovah for an offense against his majesty and holiness. This was

the prevailing teaching in the earliest times, but it changed its significance as the conception of God grew more and more ethical and spiritual and the gift came to be looked upon finally as only the outward manifestation of an inward and spiritual grace. Closely allied to this view was the second, which saw in the animal sacrificed a substitute for the man whose guilt was deserving of death. This substitutionary theory of the atonement appears clearly in the old custom recorded in Deut. 21:1–9 and in the explanation of Israel's sufferings furnished by Isa., chap. 53, and probably lies behind many of the older usages. But it is wholly without influence upon the later legislation regarding atonement and is incompatible with the teaching of the individual's personal responsibility for his own sins which is insisted upon by Ezekiel and his successors.

An ancient aspect of the atoning ritual which persisted all through Israel's history is the conviction that "unwitting" sins must be expiated. Some scholars contend that atonement was available for unwitting sins only; but this contention does not reckon faithfully with such passages as Lev. 5:1; 6:1–7; Num. 16:41 ff. The entire conception of "unwitting" sin in-

volves the holding of a mechanical and unethical idea of God. It makes sin a matter of forms and ceremonies instead of, or at least alongside of, its being regarded as a product of the human will. This view, however, is confined to the priestly school which treasured the ancient rites and never entirely freed itself from primitive ideas about God and sin. Another priestly conception, closely allied to and concurrent with that of "unwitting" sins, is that atonement is an act of purification whereby the uncleanness and sin so obnoxious to Jehovah are removed from his sight and all obstacles to the free course of his grace are done away with. This work of purification can be accomplished only by God himself; the most that man can do is to put himself in an attitude of receptivity toward the divine favor.

The final teaching of the priests was that atonement was to be obtained through absolute obedience to the divine will. The complete expression of that will is found in the requirements of the Mosaic law. The faithful and exact performance of all these requirements assures the nation and the individual of the permanent possession of the divine favor. Implied in all the later teaching regarding atone-

ment was the belief that the atoning act or series of acts was primarily indicative of a change of attitude on the part of the one making atonement. This change is prerequisite to the bestowal of pardon.

Underlying all the ceremonies, figures, and symbols of the atoning ritual, there is the ineradicable teaching of the holiness of God. This holiness, unmoral in its beginnings, is at the close allied to and informed with ethical truth. Holiness includes justice and demands righteousness. But it is a justice "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." The penalty of sin is death; but the justice of God does not insist upon "the due and forfeit of my bond." It is a justice tempered with mercy and throbbing with love. Jehovah is "long-suffering and plenteous in mercy and repenteth himself of the evil." The availability of pardon is implied in every atoning rite. The prerequisites to the securing of pardon are so graduated as to rule out none who sincerely desire it, no matter how poor or friendless. It is of the utmost importance that the conditions be met, but they are not intended to be unreasonably severe. The ritual of atonement was hardly looked upon as a thing in itself pleasing to God, except in so

far as the performance of it was a test of obedience to divine law. Whatever notions may have prevailed about the efficacy of the ritual in early times, or in the minds of the populace at large, it can scarcely be doubted that for the later legislators themselves the chief value of the ceremony was on its manward rather than its Godward side. It served as a great educational agency inculcating in the hearts and minds of participants and spectators right conceptions of the sinfulness of man and the holiness and mercy of the just God.

To the prophets must be conceded the honor of having most clearly discerned the character of God and of having consequently best understood the nature of the atoning process. Caring little for forms they insist upon repentance as the *sine qua non* of forgiveness. Fellowship with God and the enjoyment of his favor are open only to those who with singleness of eye seek to do his will. "Seek good and not evil, that ye may live and that Jehovah, God of Hosts, may be with you as ye have said." The simplicity and depth of this prophetic teaching are unsurpassed. It reveals on the one hand a full understanding of the human heart and, on the other, a true appreciation of the will of

God. At one other point the prophets attain to high vision; that is, in the teaching that the unmerited suffering of the innocent may have redemptive power in the hearts of the guilty to whom the suffering was due. Through the observation of this suffering, the wicked come to the knowledge of the true God and so are bowed in repentance before him. Beneath all the prophetic teaching concerning reconciliation lies the assumption that the power to place himself in an attitude pleasing to God resides in the sinner; nothing but his own will separates him from God, who willeth not the death of a sinner but rather that the "wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. 33:11).

2. *Later Jewish ideas.*—From the restoration of the temple in the days of Zerubbabel till its fall in 70 A. D., temple worship and temple sacrifices continued practically without interruption, but sacrifice was no longer, if it ever had been, the central element of the religion of the individual Jew. Sacrifices were taken up into the legal system and were offered, not because of any inherent virtue in them or power to secure the forgiveness of sins, but because the law required it, and the altar sacrifices had to do chiefly with the relation of Israel as a whole

to God, rather than with the individual. Sacrifice is mentioned in connection with the atonement of the sins of the individual in one book (II Maccabees) of the later pre-Talmudic literature, but it is not clear that even for this writer it had intrinsic propitiatory value (cf. chap. iv, pp. 66 ff.). Of atonement for the nation through the suffering of the righteous members of the nation there are traces in Josephus and in IV Maccabees. The thought seems to be that when the nation has sinned, God must manifest displeasure with their sin, and that he may do this if he will, not by punishing the whole nation, but by permitting evil to fall upon a few who are representatives of the whole. At the same time there is here perhaps the germ out of which there grew that conception which more or less dominated later Jewish thought, that a man's standing before God is determined by the good works to his credit.

If we may discern any constant doctrine running through these later writings, it is that the *individual* is forgiven when he repents and lives righteously; the sin of the *nation* may be forgiven in consequence of a manifestation of the divine wrath falling upon the righteous representatives of the sinful nation, or of an act

of notable righteousness by an individual even though this involves no suffering on his part.

3. *Common elements of New Testament teaching.*—Before passing to the summary of the teachings of the individual teachers and writers of the New Testament, it will be well to call attention to certain elements of that teaching, in which they are all substantially in agreement.

a) It is the doctrine of practically all the books of the New Testament that human sin causes alienation between God and man, making sinful men the object of his righteous wrath.

b) The New Testament writers differ greatly among themselves in the particular classes of sins which they especially condemn, but it is the common teaching of all of those who express themselves on this matter that that in sin which makes it guilty, and which makes sinful men the object of divine displeasure, is the suppression of known or knowable truth and failure to act in accordance with it. Paul's statement that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety and wickedness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness" is one with which all New Testament writers substantially agree.

c) All New Testament teachers and writers

agree that the condition of forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God is ethical. This ethical condition is variously stated as repentance, faith in Jesus Christ, forgiveness of others, participation in the moral life of Christ, the doing of law. But the variant statements, found often in the same writer, indicate no real difference of teaching.

d) The New Testament writers agree that there is a relation between the reconciliation of the sinner with God and the sufferings and death of Jesus. What the nature of this relationship is, and the extent of variation in the teaching of different writers on this point, will appear later.

4. *John the Baptist.*—There is no satisfactory indication that John the Baptist connected atonement for sins with the death of Jesus. His conception of the coming one was of a judge who was coming to speedy and decisive judgment on Israel. The wrath of God which is to be inflicted by him may be escaped and men saved by repentance manifested in good works. Jesus, when he appears, is recognized as one who suffers in that he bears the load of human sin; but this is a testimony of observation and insight, not an element of John's doctrine of atonement.

5. *The teaching of Jesus* —The whole representation of Jesus' teaching in the Fourth Gospel differs widely in form and to some extent in substance from that of the Synoptic Gospels. But the two reports are strikingly similar in substance so far as concerns Jesus' teaching concerning the meaning of his death and the basis of forgiveness. Two elements of Jesus' thought about his death stand out clearly both in the Synoptic Gospels and in John:

a) He recognizes his death as the resultant of two factors: fidelity on his own part to a principle of life which is universally obligatory, and human sin as manifested in his own nation. His sufferings, therefore, fall under a general law. They who follow him in the adoption of this principle of life may not die a violent death, but they devote themselves to the interest of their fellow-men without reserve even unto death. Jesus did nothing, suffered nothing that he did not ask his followers to do and suffer in principle, and, if occasion should require, in fact.

b) The death of Jesus is not a mere matter of necessity. It has redemptive value for men. He gives his life a ransom for many; but in the sense that his death is an exemplification

of the true principle of human life, and becomes the means of bringing men into covenant relationship with God, thus effecting reconciliation between God and sinful man.

6. *The primitive church.*—The early church so far as its thought can be discerned from the sources accessible to us (chiefly the first part of the book of Acts) looked upon the death of Jesus as that of the suffering servant of Jehovah. It emphasized especially (*a*) the wickedness of those who murdered him, and (*b*) the fact that his death was nevertheless a fulfilment of prophecy and of divine purpose. This representation was no doubt in part apologetic, made under the influence of the desire to defend the messiahship of Jesus against the apparently conflicting fact of his rejection and death at the hands of his own nation, and to convert this fact into an argument in favor of his messiahship. But it reflects at the same time the thought of the church that the death of Jesus was vicarious, being not the punishment of his own sin, but endured that he might give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. Of a more definitely formulated doctrine, there is no trace, either in Acts or in the Epistle of James. Forgiveness, even of the murderers of Jesus, is freely granted

by God on condition of repentance and acceptance of the Jesus whom they had killed. In particular the death of Jesus was not interpreted as succeeding the old sacrifices and taking over their meaning.

7. *The teaching of the apostle Paul.*—(*a*) The apostle Paul looks upon the death of Jesus as at once proof of the divine love of sinful men and a manifestation of Christ's own love. This conception, which is undoubtedly latent in all the earlier New Testament teaching, is explicit in Paul and fundamental to his whole thought.

b) The most characteristic element of Paul's thought about the death of Jesus is that it is a demonstration of the divine righteousness, a revelation of God's hostility to sin. This is an explicit statement of a doctrine which perhaps underlies the statements of IV Maccabees about the death of the martyrs.[1]

c) By the virtue of his death and its demonstration of divine righteousness, Jesus is in the divine plan propitiatory for those that have faith. In other words, a revelation of God's holy displeasure against sin being furnished in the death of Jesus, it is possible for God gra-

[1] It is to be remembered that the two writers are nearly contemporary.

ciously to forgive and accept those who on their part accept Jesus by faith.

d) Through the death of Jesus and the accompanying new revelation of a principle of faith, the law as a statutory system is abolished and men are delivered from the curse of the law, i. e., are enabled to see that that curse which the law, according to a strictly legalistic interpretation of it, pronounces on all men, because they have not continued in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them, does not truly represent God's attitude toward men, but that he desires the pardon and redemption of men, and forgives those who have faith.

e) In common with Jesus himself Paul recognizes Jesus' death as falling under a law under which the disciple also is placed. He desires himself to enter into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and to fill up that which is lacking in them. Of any relation between the death of Jesus and the sacrifices of the Levitical system, there is but the slightest hint in the writings of Paul. His conceptions are influenced by the dominant legalism of Jewish thinking rather than by the ritualistic thought which, as we have already seen, had largely fallen into the back-

ground in this period, existing, so far as it did at all, as a mere phase of legalism.

f) In his later letters Paul gives to the death of Jesus not only a racial, but even a cosmic significance. Through it, it is God's purpose to reconcile to him all things in heaven and earth.

8. *The teaching of I Peter.*—The author of the First Epistle of Peter speaks of the death of Jesus chiefly with the purpose of exhorting his readers to endure patiently suffering for well-doing and not for ill-doing. In so doing he points to Jesus as fulfilling the prophecy of Isa., chap. 53. The assertion that Jesus bore our sins on the tree has for its chief purpose to present the example of Jesus as suffering willingly though innocently. It means not that he bore the penalty of our sins but that the necessity of his death lay not in his own sin, but in that of others. Its purpose is that men should die to sin and live to righteousness. The doctrine of the epistle is in essential points identical with that of Paul, though less fully and clearly expressed.

9. *The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews* speaks of the sufferings of Jesus as the means of his perfecting, and as accomplishing what the

sacrifices faintly symbolized but could never accomplish, the cleansing of the conscience from dead works. This he does in that his blood is the blood of a new covenant, the peculiarity of which is that the law of God is written on the heart. Here are the elements of a doctrine of atonement, but unorganized, because it was no part of the purpose of the epistle to expound a doctrine of atonement. If from these elements we may frame a doctrine, it seems to be that men are brought into reconciliation with God through a faith in Jesus Christ which makes them partakers of his achieved virtue, that virtue which he achieved in his sufferings through the shedding of his blood. Thus he becomes the mediator of a better covenant because there is thus written upon the hearts of men that law of God to which he also learned obedience, and to which they become obedient by that fellowship with him into which they enter by faith.

10. *The author of the Gospel and the First Epistle of John* teaches that Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the world. It is the mission of Jesus to remove the alienation which sin has created between God and man, and to bring about reconciliation. He is propitiatory

and his death is vicarious. How it is so is not distinctly said; but its effectiveness in the reconciliation of men to God is intimated to be in that it discloses principles of living, which, being principles of God's own life, must become the principle of human lives, in order that they may be reconciled to God, and that it so reveals this principle that they who believe on the Son of God, in whom it is revealed, become partakers of his life.

11. *The Apocalypse.*—It is the doctrine of the Book of Revelation that they are acceptable to God who have been cleansed from sin, who are clothed in the fine linen of righteous acts. Men are thus cleansed and purchased unto God to be his people, because of, or through, the blood of the Lamb that was slain; i. e., through participation in that moral life, that attitude toward sin and the world which Jesus manifested in the laying-down of his life. Thus the condition of acceptance by God is ethical, and the death of Jesus has its significance in that it is efficient for the bringing-about of this ethical condition.

12. Finally then, no New Testament writer teaches the doctrine that the death of Jesus satisfies a demand of God that sin shall be pun-

ished, or is substitutionary in the sense that in it Jesus endures the punishment due to others. The New Testament writers find the significance of his death in its revelation of God's love, in its realization of the ideal of the suffering servant of Jehovah, in its fulfilment of the principle of devotion to the interests of mankind, in accordance with which all men ought to live. In other words, he, through his death, reconciles to God, brings into the favor of God, those who have faith in him, those who become partakers of his life, i. e., follow in his footsteps and adopt his principle of life.

It is the distinctive thought of Paul that the death of Jesus is a demonstration of the divine disapproval of sin, and as such furnishes a necessary basis for the justification through faith of those who have sinned; and that through his death he brought to an end the reign of statutory law and broke down the wall between Jew and gentile.

It is the distinctive thought of Hebrews that through this suffering Jesus was made perfect, and that by his offering of himself through the eternal spirit, he being at once priest and offering, he displaced the old sacrificial system.

It is the distinctive thought of First Peter that

the suffering of Jesus innocently, the righteous for the wicked, set for us an example that we should follow.

But these peculiarities in no case amount to contradiction or involve mutually exclusive ideas. The common doctrine of the New Testament is that as sin creates alienation between God and man, making man the object of divine displeasure, so repentance, faith in Jesus, adoption of that principle of life which Jesus exemplified pre-eminently in his death, is the basis of forgiveness and acceptance with God.

The best elements in the Old Testament teachings concerning atonement have been gathered up and carried on into the New. The unethical phases of the idea of sin have been eliminated; the mechanical and ritualistic aspects of the atonement idea have been left behind; and primitive notions of the transfer of guilt or righteousness from one person to another are outgrown. The prophets' emphasis upon repentance is the core of the New Testament teaching. Their insistence upon right character as the only way to reconciliation with God is everywhere taken for granted in the New Testament. The "exceeding sinfulness of sin" is even more keenly realized in the

new dispensation than it was in the old. But in the new, the beauty of holiness and the winsomeness of righteousness are also correspondingly appreciated. The God who hates sin bends every effort toward converting the sinner, withholding not even his only begotten Son. The measure of the intensity of God's longing for reconciliation is far greater than the prophets ever dreamed. The Old Testament teachings find their full fruition in those of the New. In both, communion with God is regarded as the highest good; and as the conception of God becomes continually more exalted, ethical, and spiritual the requirements necessary to fellowship with him become correspondingly more personal and vital, finding their full satisfaction in the life and character of Jesus, the anointed of God.

V

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHINGS CONCERNING ATONEMENT

BY

GERALD BIRNEY SMITH

Associate Professor of Dogmatic Theology
The University of Chicago

CHAPTER XII

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIBLICAL TEACHINGS CONCERNING ATONEMENT

The preceding chapters have set forth the various aspects of the problem of atonement as these appear in the Bible. We have still to ask what is the value of the biblical material to men in the twentieth century who wish to formulate vital convictions. To attempt merely to add together the various teachings of the Bible would give to us a scholastic summary so loaded with details that it would prove a serious problem to master it. Moreover, if we assume that our theology must reproduce biblical theology, it is hard to resist the subtle temptation to read into scriptural texts our own pet theories. Thus the advocates of the doctrine of penal substitution have been quite sure that they were consistently setting forth the teaching of Scripture; and those who hold the "moral-influence" theory have with equal confidence cited proof-texts in confirmation of their position. How, then, shall we evaluate the teaching of the Bible? Of what use may it be to us in formulating our con-

victions on the important themes with which it deals?

The historical method of biblical interpretation, while it specifically disclaims any purpose of formulating doctrines for immediate use in systematic theology, nevertheless furnishes us with a clue to the next step in the process. This method aims to set forth as accurately as possible the convictions which lay in the mind of the biblical writer. But in order to accomplish this end the historian must read the documents before him with the desire to reproduce in imagination the actual experience of the man whose convictions he is interpreting. Thus, as the background for the interpretation of a biblical passage, the historical student gives to us an appreciation of the concrete historical situation which occasioned the problems which found their solution in the moral and spiritual convictions recorded. In other words, for the historical student the biblical *teachings* are not ultimate. They are rather the *means* by which we are enabled to apprehend the actual life and the genuine spiritual problems which the biblical writers met. Words, sentences, arguments, conclusions—these are all like the features on a man's face, like the gestures of an orator.

They are of value only as they reveal to us the spirit of the man himself. To be furnished with Paul's conclusions concerning the significance of the death of Christ is less important than is the privilege of meeting with Paul the challenge to make a positive place for that death in the providential purpose of God. Thus a spiritual fellowship with the great souls who have grappled in earnest with the profound problems of the spiritual life is developed by the historical method of biblical interpretation.

Modern psychology is constantly warning us not to substitute the theories of books for contact with reality. Modern science compels the student to turn from the textbook to the laboratory in his search for truth. The historical method of biblical study is in accord with this spirit of research in other realms of learning. It leads us into the presence of the *realities* of the Bible. It gives to us, not abstract theories, but concrete instances of spiritual achievement. It furnishes us, not with a substitute for theological thinking, but with a powerful inspiration to do that thinking. It communicates to us the impulse which would not let the prophets of Israel rest until God had become supreme in a world where the chosen

people were conquered by the enemies of Jehovah. It inspires in us something of the faith which sent Paul out as an apostle of the Jesus whose followers he had once despised and persecuted. To be forced to face the facts of life instead of repeating the solutions of other men is a tremenduous gain, both for a scientific understanding of theology and for a vital exposition of religious doctrines.

This discovery of the concrete nature of the realities of the Bible is conditioned on an understanding of the historical and social conditions under which a doctrine was formulated. If religious convictions are to be real and vital, they must solve living problems. Theology must interpret the social and physical environment of its age if it is to enable men to see the working of God in that environment. So the Bible spoke primarily to men living in Bible times. It penetrated the clouds of their perplexities by revealing the light of the divine purpose. It is true that the clouds of one period are not the clouds of another. The precise solution of a religious problem for one age is not the exact solution which a subsequent age needs. Theology is being constantly reconstructed as the experience of the race changes. But when the

light has once broken through the clouds, when humanity has once seen the glory of God, each later generation has its insight quickened and thus finds positive aid in its own religious thinking. A sympathetic appreciation of the biblical doctrine of atonement, therefore, puts us into possession of certain aspects of the problem of God's dealings with men, an acquaintance with which will enable us more clearly to apprehend our own task of explaining how religious communion with God is possible for sinful men.

With this suggestion as to the way in which the biblical material is to be used, let us ask what inspiration and help we may gain from it for our own religious thinking? What is the real heritage left by the men of the Bible for the spiritual enrichment of later generations?

We must picture the early Israelites living amid the circumstances common to other Semitic peoples of the day, accepting as a matter of course the social ideals of their time. The tribe or clan was of primary importance. An injury to any member of the clan must be avenged by the clan. A wrong done by some member of the tribe could be made right by other members of the tribe who had had no individual respon-

sibility for the wrong. Men were accustomed to live under the sway of arbitrary rules which often had small regard for personal rights. The welfare of the social group to which the individual belonged was believed to be secured by maintaining right relations to the god of the group. For the individual Israelite, the primary duty was to keep intact the conditions on which Jehovah's favor might be expected. Current religious exposition pictured gods whose favor was attained if they could enjoy the smell and the taste of a sacrificial feast, gods whose life was physically bound up with the life of the tribe, gods who would accept various forms of commutation for sins. It is evident that such modes of securing the favor of the deity, while they may involve moral elements, are not primarily moral.

The Old Testament shows traces of these unmoral conceptions. But the significant trait in the development of Hebrew religious thought is the constant emphasis on the essentially *moral* nature of atonement. In the teachings of the prophets this emphasis on righteousness takes the form of a severe denunciation of ritual and cultus when it obscures the direct moral responsibility of man in the sight of God, or

when it leads man to suppose that God will accept any substitute for a repentant purpose on the part of the wrong-doer. The priestly teaching, while retaining a positive place for ritual and sacrifice, made the details of the ritual primarily expressions of moral obedience to God. The atoning value of sacrifice is to be found in the fact that it indicates the complete obedience of the worshiper to the minutest commands of God. Thus the real significance of the Old Testament teaching concerning atonement is not to be found in sacramental conceptions which Israel shared with other nations of antiquity, but in the complete triumph of the ideal of righteousness as the all-important element in any ritual. A doctrine of atonement which faithfully reproduces the details of the Old Testament sacrificial conception may be quite incompatible with the real teaching of the Old Testament if it violates the canons of morality. Granting that God may be propitiated by outward acts, still these outward acts are of value only as they embody a completely righteous purpose on the part of sinful man. When we look at the teaching of the Old Testament against that historical background which furnishes so many elements en-

tirely capable of another interpretation, we see that the distinguishing mark of Hebrew theology is the primary emphasis on righteousness. To hold as true a doctrine of atonement, all the details of which may be found in the Levitical cultus, but which failed to make these details subservient to righteousness, would be to retain the shell and to throw away the kernel of the biblical teaching. Any theory which fails to enlist the highest moral approval, which must construct a defense for itself before the bar of moral judgment, merits the denunciations which the prophets pronounced against similar theological teachings in their day. Thus, if we are to follow the clue furnished by the Old Testament teaching concerning atonement, we must judge the correctness of our doctrine, not by external conformity but by inner moral quality. The traditional cultus was largely incidental in the religious history of Israel. If the prophets and the reforming priests had come into a different social and religious environment, they would have seized upon that different cultus for the purpose of inculcating the righteousness which God desires as the end of all worship and all ceremonies. In Judaism, we find that the original significance of many of the rites had

been entirely forgotten. All had come to be regarded primarily as requirements of the righteous God, by keeping of which his children may become righteous in his sight.

In addition to this moralizing of sacrificial rites in the history of Israel, another important element comes to view. This is the Hebrew solution of the problem of evil. The presence of disaster is naturally interpreted as an evidence of the displeasure of deity. It is believed to be a punishment inflicted so as to recall men to a sense of obligation to God. But there are two very different conclusions which may be drawn from the experience of pain. One may simply seek freedom from suffering in any possible way; or one may through the discipline of pain be morally and spiritually transformed. The first conclusion has often been drawn. Shall not man's primary aim be to escape physical evil? to avoid want and to seek ease and comfort? Shall not atonement be made for the purpose of securing worldly prosperity? Pagan sacrifices are frequently little more than forms of religious magic, by which favorable results may be obtained by non-moral means. Israel, too, was tempted to regard religion as a means of obtaining

worldly prosperity. And the naturalistic conception of a tribal god, whose very existence was believed to be bound up in the persistence of the tribe, who would cease to have any place in the world if he had no people to worship him, tended to promote this species of superstition. To promote national prosperity therefore meant to please God. To employ a cultus learned from Baal-worship, in order to obtain plentiful harvests, sometimes came to be quite as important as to seek righteousness. Even the earlier prophets regarded national glory as the end to be promoted by religion. But the later prophets proclaim the complete dissolution of the earlier union between moral and physical welfare. Physical evil may be a moral good. The destruction of the nation, terrible as it is, may nevertheless be the only way in which God can accomplish his purpose to make men righteous. Through such a bitter experience of national affliction was born that sublime conception of suffering as a means of redemption so eloquently portrayed by the Isaiah of the Exile. Here indeed, we have the conception of vicarious suffering as a redemptive agency; but it is at the farthest remove from the quantitative picture of an equivalent rendered that the *status quo* may be

restored. It suggests a mysterious sharing in the work of atonement by the elect of God, so that suffering is not merely a discipline for the sufferer, but is also a means by which those who do not know the atoning purpose of God are made aware of it, and are drawn by it to seek God. To transform the conception of substitutionary sacrifice into so sublime an interpretation of the significance of suffering is a spiritual achievement at which the world will ever marvel. To believe that righteous men, by moral transformation through suffering, may in the very moment of seeming defeat and humiliation be actually working out the redemptive purpose of God is to give to the world a transcendent interpretation of the deepest mystery of life. Even what human judgment declares to be a dire affliction serves the purpose of the righteous God, and although it does not cease to be a real evil, it becomes completely moralized. It receives positive value when it becomes a means through which the gentiles are to be brought to acknowledge God. Atonement through vicarious suffering gives a place for evil in God's world without destroying faith in the holy love of God.

When we turn to the New Testament, we

find a reinforcement of the principles already found in the development of the doctrine of atonement in the Old Testament. Judaism had so far moralized ritual, that the significance of a rite was found in the fact that it was the commandment of God. To enjoy the favor of God one must keep the law of righteousness. There was no other way. Superstition and magic had been displaced by moral seriousness. But along with this conception of the moral significance of all cultus went a new danger, that of a mechanical interpretation of religious life. The horizon of the Pharisee was limited. He could not see beyond the external manifestations of the divine will into the infinite depths of the larger purposes of God. He could be so exclusively devoted to the technical commands of God that he could be unaware of his religious defects in neglecting to show a godlike love toward God's children who were in need. Jesus devoted his life to the proclamation and realization of this larger and deeper righteousness, and suffered death in his fidelity to this higher revelation. His death thus embodied the consequences of the conflict between the divine revelation of goodness and the hostility aroused among men by the proc-

lamation of that goodness. It revealed once for all that righteousness cannot be identified with the comfortable, respectable routine of the Pharisee. It involves mystery and tragedy. It seems to reverse the values of men, and to place upon those who least deserve it the heaviest burdens, while sinners escape the punishment which should be visited upon sins. The death of Christ is thus in the foreground of the early Christian thought.

But this should not blind us to the fact that the disciples of Jesus knew that the primary condition of experiencing the favor of God was internal rather than external. Jesus had constantly denounced those externals which stood in the way of a complete inner devotion to the will of God. It was the witness of the Spirit, rather than any theory of the atonement, which gave to the early Christians their confidence and joy. It was the Christ living within him whom Paul worshiped and from whom he received the assurance of God's blessing. Nothing could more completely misrepresent the teachings of the New Testament concerning the forgiveness of sin than a doctrine of atonement which primarily emphasizes an external balancing of accounts. All theories

which draw their inspiration from the New Testament must be tested by their ability to promote that vital inner life with God which the disciples of Christ enjoyed day by day. This evident character of the New Testament will prevent us from any mere technical construction of an "objective" theory of the atonement. When externalism was the source of the religious blindness which caused the death of Christ, and which inspired the persecution of the disciples, we may be sure that the remedy for this spiritual blindness would not be sought in a new *formal doctrine.*

In order to estimate the significance of the teaching of Paul, then, we must not center our attention in the externals of his theory of atonement. We must remember that he had been trained in the school of legalism. Paul had felt the moral rigor which had been incorporated into the life of the Pharisee. But his religious experience had led him to see that it was legalism which had crucified Christ, legalism which had inspired the attempt to exterminate the new faith. So Paul's whole Christian preaching was devoted to the attempt to lift men out of legalism into something better. But if the new way of being reconciled to God was better than

the old, it must not appear less rigorously moral. It must not represent God as compromising with sin. Forgiveness must not mean a lower moral standard on the part of God. Therefore, just because legalism stood for the righteous demand of God, Paul deliberately interpreted the Christian doctrine in terms of the legalistic conception of atonement. But the purpose of this interpretation is not to perpetuate legalism, but to show that the law is superseded in the deeper righteousness made possible in Christ. It is beyond the power of man to keep the law of God. Every soul fails and comes short of the glory of God. If God were to execute strict judgment, no one could escape the death penalty. In the death of Christ, who had identified himself with men because he embodied God's love for men, God shows his absolute condemnation of sin. The penalty which we deserve fell on Christ—not that by this substitution we might entirely evade the penalty, but in order that by uniting ourselves in faith to Christ, and thus in spirit suffering death with him, we might share in the transformation of suffering from a mere penalty into a redemptive power for men. God could never be satisfied with mere external punishment of sin. He must have

the acknowledgment on the part of the sinner that sin is so terrible that its meaning can be expressed only by death. But with this confession the repentant wrong-doer may so identify himself with the sufferings of Christ that he shall become a missionary of the cross with its message of redemption.

When, then, we find in Paul's epistles those technical expressions which have often been made fundamental in expounding the doctrine of atonement, we should remember that these are but the current ideas of the age. It is questionable whether even to Paul and his contemporaries they were understood literally. Paul knew perfectly well that the death of Jesus was not a bloody death, as was the case with an animal whose blood was used for ritual purposes. Such terms as these and others were elements of the social vocabulary of the age, and naturally entered into any exposition of religious truth. Now, the evident purpose of the apostle is to lead man out of the technical, legalistic ideal of the relation between God and man into the inner experience of the redemptive work of Christ. The ritualistic and sacrificial figures represent the historical conditions of any religious thinking of the day. The significant thing

is not that these figures of speech were used, but that they were so used as to expound the conception of a profound inward and spiritual redemption wrought in the soul of man by the indwelling presence of Christ, and the mystical self-identification of the Christian with the death and resurrection of his Lord. The doctrine of the atonement took the particular form which Paul gave to it because he lived under the sway of certain current religious ideas. His spiritual problems were formulated in terms of these conceptions, and it is only as we learn to see in the Pauline doctrines the spiritual realities for which they stood that we are in a position to give to them a right interpretation. If in our modern thought these conceptions do not embody vital religious convictions, we are in danger of caricaturing the apostle by setting forth the externals of his theory without the direct religious suggestions which they embodied for him.

And the same is true of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which has furnished so much material for theologians. It uses, indeed, the conception of sacrifice. But the whole aim of the argument is to show that Christ did away with all externalism. The literal sacrifices had no real

power save as they symbolized the great coming work of Christ. The new covenant is to be written in the heart, not outwardly executed. And Christ makes possible this new covenant just because his work was spiritual, not external. His sufferings were the means of his spiritual perfecting. They thus derive their entire significance from their connection with his inner life; and the followers of Christ must become sharers of that inward life in order to receive the benefits of his redemptive work. The inner transformation of the Christian is of more importance than the ritual of sacrifice.

Thus we find in the New Testament, as in the Old, that the existing religious convictions of the age are taken up and developed into a more perfect expression of the truth that the end of atonement is to make men inwardly righteous. God is concerned less to maintain the inviolability of his external relations with men than to enable men to turn from sin and to be spiritually transformed. The Jewish ritual, which had been the expression of rigorous moral ideals, is declared to be inadequate to produce the highest type of righteousness. Still the new ideal of inward rightness must be shown to be

better than the old legalism. Thus the details of the old conceptions, wherever they embody high ideals of morality, are taken as means of expounding the new. And in this way the redemptive love of God, which reaches farther than the Jew had dreamed, is proclaimed without the slightest diminution of the ideal of righteousness which had attached itself to the older order. The various writers of the New Testament employ various aspects of this older ritual in order to expound their convictions. But they all agree that the end to be attained is the securing, not simply of acquittal at the final judgment, but of an inward righteousness which shall make that acquittal a morally true judgment on the part of God and not a mere technical release.

The real reason why the *death* of Christ occupies so large a place in the expositions of the New Testament is because that fact was the great mystery to be explained. How could it be possible that God should allow the Messiah to suffer death? This question is parallel to the great problem which engaged the later prophets: How could God allow his chosen people to be nationally annihilated? We saw that in the Old Testament this tragedy became

the vehicle of a new conception of the meaning of evil in the world. Exactly so the New Testament writers are able to transform the death of the Messiah into a revelation of the redemptive love of God. The cross, which had been the symbol of human disgrace became for the apostle Paul the symbol of divine love and the means of winning the world to God. The redemptive purpose of God is supremely revealed in the vicarious suffering of the One who completely incarnated the divine love and righteousness. The pictorial representation of the way in which God's righteousness and his mercy are both satisfied may seem strange to us today, after our centuries of education away from legalism. But even the most mechanical interpretation of Paulinism cannot conceal the fact that for the great apostle "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." If it seemed to Paul that certain juridical demands must be satisfied in order that men might not suppose that God, in forgiving, was less insistent on holiness than the Jew believed him to be, it was only because Paul, like the other biblical writers, was concerned that salvation should affirm unequivocally the righteousness of God in his purpose to secure the salvation

of men. The moral return of sinful men to God could be secured only by vicarious suffering on the part of God's chosen one. In the evil of human history lies the possibility of a great moral redemptive agency. The death of Christ, instead of being an evidence of the defeat of God, is rather the crowning exhibition of the power of God to save even to the uttermost.

The significance of the biblical teaching concerning atonement, then, is to be found in the spiritual meaning which was given to the current modes of thinking about God's relations to men. While positive use was made of the rituals and the theological concepts of the age, the end of the biblical interpretation is the emancipation of faith from these very externals when they have done their work. The details of the redemptive theology of the Bible are there, not so much to expound an external plan of salvation, as to enforce the ideal of a *moral* salvation. Any doctrine of the atonement which does not lift a man morally is not biblical in spirit, even if it employs biblical proof-texts. But along with this emphasis on the moral end of redemption goes the deepening sense of the cost of such redemption. Thus suffering comes to have a

new significance for religious faith. Instead of being the sign of divine anger, it may be the evidence of divine election to a vital share in the work of saving men.

CHAPTER XIII

ATONEMENT IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN THOUGHT

It is generally recognized that modern men find difficulties in existing theological statements of the doctrine of the atonement, and that efforts should be made to restate it so that it may come with power to our age. This task, however, is often conceived as the translation of the apostolic conceptions into modern language. It is thought that if we can only substitute current twentieth-century equivalents for Paul's first-century words and phrases all difficulties should vanish. It is felt that we may thus preserve the biblical doctrine intact, and at the same time make its meaning clear.

Such an attempt at rewriting the biblical doctrine, however, is likely to be a failure. At best, it can arouse only an intellectual appreciation of the thoughts of other days; and at the worst it may make the doctrine of atonement seem fatally artificial. For not only are the biblical words foreign to us; the very ideas which they embody may belong to a dead social life. There may actually be no modern equivalents.

And nothing can be more fatal to the vitality of a religious doctrine than to relate it indissolubly to archaic concepts. In an age when every child had seen literal sacrifices, and knew their religious significance, a doctrine of atonement in terms of the blood of Christ would bring an instant vital response, and the belief in the sacrificial efficacy of Christ's death would be genuine. But if one has first to discover the meaning of sacrifice to an age which has entirely abandoned this form of religious cultus, one begins with an artificial basis for doctrine. To us an altar is a strange thing, and the notion of a religious value in the shedding of blood is either absurd or repugnant unless familiarity with the idea through Sunday-school instruction has overcome our protest. But even this acquired familiarity is academic. It represents no real experience in our life. The doctrine of physical sacrifice may be accepted on authority, but if so it is a truth isolated from our actual spiritual life. To try to set forth the basis of atonement with God in terms of such sacrifice will thus mean that what should be the most profoundly vital element in religion comes to be viewed as a formal transaction. The genuine emotion which is often connected with the

affirmation of a theological proposition may, indeed, lend to the doctrine some accidental value. But unless theology be actually related to reality as we know it, it tends constantly toward mechanical and superficial ideals.

What is true of the word "sacrifice" is equally true of many other biblical terms. What possible direct meaning for us can be found in the conception that Christ is our "passover"? The passover feast is entirely foreign to our life. To explain the work of Christ in such phraseology would be to elucidate what is reasonably clear by what is vague and uncertain. It is true that the historian may reconstruct the passover for us and introduce us to the real religious significance of the event; and this is more or less successfully done in our biblical study. But no concept from a far-away age artificially introduced into our circle of thought can begin to compare in influence and power with the concepts inwrought into our thinking by the stress of actual life. In a day when the ransom of prisoners was a familiar occurrence, it was possible to use the term "ransom" with real efficiency. And men who were in daily contact with a government which exercised absolute powers regardless of the personal wel-

fare of individuals, could accept without protest a conception of punishment as something which the government had a right to exact as an equivalent in payment of the offense. A people which could demand the substitution of Barabbas for Jesus would not be over-critical of a doctrine of atonement which involved substitution.

But our modern political experience leads us into a different conception of the relation of government to subjects. Accordingly, it would be an undertaking devoid of real religious value to try to reinterpret the biblical conceptions in modern equivalents. We have absolutely no equivalents for some of these conceptions. Indispensable as is a sympathetic historical understanding of the biblical doctrine of the atonement, it does not furnish us with the primary materials for the task of theological construction today. The first characteristic of all biblical teaching is genuineness rather than conformity. The writers dealt with what everyone felt to be real. And one reason why the Bible is a living book in contrast to most later theologies lies precisely in the fact that it presents truth directly from life, while our theologians have tried the academic task of repro-

ducing the teachings of a book. If, then, we are to preserve the trait of genuineness which is characteristic of the Bible, we must first ask what things are real to us today in the religious realm.

The history of the doctrine of the atonement is an admirable illustration of the necessity for beginning with actual life. Those theories which have passed into permanent form were built up by using conceptions real to the age in which they were formulated. Anselm pictured the relation of man to God in terms of the feudal polity of his day. Grotius employed that ideal of the sanctity of governmental requirements which in the infancy of our modern democratic development was dear to the heart of every true man. Bushnell appealed to the self-forgetting devotion of mother and patriot, and found a quick response. None of these great theories attempts primarily to reproduce the biblical doctrine. Each employs the existing institutions and conceptions of the day to interpret the transforming influence of the Christian ideal of salvation.

Our first task, then, must be to ascertain the essential elements of modern thought; to find what are the great realities in the spiritual life

of today, and to ask how we may best interpret these in the light of our Christian convictions. What is the real moral evil from which men seek deliverance? What is the pathway by which wrongs may be righted? How can the penitent soul find reconciliation to God? These questions must be asked in such a way as to meet the conditions of the twentieth century.

Preachers and theologians often deplore the decline of the sense of sin in modern times. The awful "conviction of sin" which was a normal part of the confessions of our fathers is seldom found save in missions where outcasts and vicious men are converted. The ordinary religious experience takes the form of a desire to lead a better life. It does not necessarily involve a consciousness of a radical inner transformation. In many churches education and culture are more efficient than the old-fashioned evangelism. Somehow our age does not feel the reality of that conception of sin which our forefathers held. We may deplore the fact; but the change in this respect is too evident to be denied. Indeed, religious aspiration too often expresses itself in such movements as Christian Science, seeking a redemption from

general evil rather than from sin in the strictly ethical sense. Even evangelical preachers frequently become advocates of culture rather than heralds of redemption from the curse of God.

Now the older presentations of the doctrine of the atonement presuppose a poignant conviction of sin. When a man feels himself to be deservedly under the wrath of God, the possibility of forgiveness does not seem to him to be a light thing. It demands some special adjustment at the hands of God himself. The elaborate provision of the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son of God seems appropriate in so important a matter as sin against the infinite Holy One. But the conditions which made such a conviction of sin natural in former days have passed away. No longer in impressible childhood do we read in our primers that "in Adam's Fall we sinned all." Indeed, under the influence of the doctrine of evolution, our age is left in doubt whether any such man as Adam ever existed; or if he did, whether he possessed the primitive righteousness portrayed by systematic theologians. We have learned from biology that death is not due to sin, but is as normal an element in the world as is life. Thus

the Pauline basis of appeal to Adam's sin and its fatal consequences fails to affect us. It is impossible for men today either to repent of Adamic sin or to regard death as a penalty for sin. A doctrine of the atonement which presupposes belief in these elements will fail to grip our moral life.

But it is misleading to say that the consciousness of sin is not present today just because it does not exist in the older form. It was to be expected that as science made men familiar with the doctrine of evolution, and as biblical scholarship modified the older conception of authority, there should be a period of uncertainty and readjustment. In the first bewilderment at losing the old moorings, men raise pertinent queries. If I am not to repent of my depravity because of Adam's sin, of what do I need to repent? Am I not a pretty decent fellow after all? Do I need to do anything more than to educate my present good self into a better self? And for this do I need anything more than Jesus, the teacher? Does not he himself teach that I am God's child? May I not simply assume a filial relationship to God without the agony of despair through which my fathers felt called to go? Such has

been the not unnatural reaction from the traditional doctrine.

But we are gradually coming to feel the force of certain facts which call forth a new sense of sin destined to increase its hold on the coming generation. We have discovered that even Christian men, members of our churches, enjoying the esteem of their fellow-citizens, have been so completely devoted to the worship of Mammon, that they have falsified accounts, bribed legislatures and executives, debauched the conscience of their employees, blotted out the image of God in boys in the coal-breakers and in little girls in the factories, paid to young women a wage which left to them the alternative of starvation or moral ruin, extorted from men fortunes for which they rendered no equivalent in service, used the power of possession to shut their poorer brethren out of chosen vocations, sanctified gambling so that the shrewd manipulator of stocks is hailed as a king of finance—in short, have given themselves to the pursuit of worldly success with frightful indifference to human welfare. From the social consciousness of today arises a mighty protest against this spirit. Strong words seem appropriate here. The damnable cruelty of it all makes our blood

boil. Here, in the mighty ethical revival of our day is to be found the *real* sense of sin. Instinctively we are turning back to the prophets of Israel to find an adequate voicing of our moral indignation. And not the least ominous symptom is that where this injustice is felt most keenly, in the home of the working-man, there is arising a moral protest which we cannot leave unheeded—the condemnation of ecclesiastical Christianity because it retains unrebuked in its membership some of these very oppressors of mankind, because it is tithing mint, anise, and cummin in matters of theology, and neglecting justice and mercy.

This general situation is familiar; but let each one of us ask what part he has in this moral degradation. Have I ever, for the sake of my little share in the worship of Mammon, worn clothing over which some poor consumptive woman has stitched away her life in the sweatshop? Have I, by my unwillingness to part with a few dollars, encouraged shop-owners to underpay the girls who sell me their goods? Have I, in my eagerness to join some "get-rich-quick" project, invested my money on condition that I should be "in on the ground floor," and that there should be plenty of hindermost ones

for the devil to take when the day of reckoning comes? Have I as a religious editor admitted to my pages advertisements which spell fraud and quackery? Have I allowed an irresponsible agent to lease to purveyors of vice the houses from which I draw my income? Have I taken from the poor rent for wretched structures which by their ugliness and neglect of sanitary laws debase and enfeeble human beings? The moment I ask these questions, I find that I am perhaps no whit better than those upon whom I have been calling down maledictions. We are all involved in the social and industrial system which makes these things possible. We are all sharers in the guilt of our age. And many a man today, aghast at the revelations which have come in the clearer vision of the past months, is crying out in spiritual agony, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Terrible as was the old doctrine that we are under a curse because of our sharing of Adam's sin, no less terrible is this share which we have in the maintaining of industrial conditions and ideals which make possible the thefts and debaucheries and maimings and murders of our day. We are not mere victims of social injustice. Every one of us is to some extent *particeps criminis*.

When we face this situation, we leave behind the finished phrases of our theology, and talk in naked terms. If we do not use the word sin, it is because it is too conventional to express our deepest convictions. And yet sin has recently been expounded by a sociologist in stinging phrases which by contrast make our theological conceptions seem pale and artificial.[1] In the social consciousness of our age there is latent a sense of moral obliquity which despairs of a *laissez-faire* policy, and which cries out for deliverance. If Christianity can link its doctrine of atonement to this *real* sense of sin, it will not have to devise arguments to persuade men to accept it.

If atonement is to be made for this sin, what form must it take? When men pictured God as a monarch, making his laws for men as an earthly ruler does, it was self-evident that atonement must be made by satisfying the monarch. A broken law meant defiance of the ruler. One must pay a penalty unless the king should suggest some alternate way of being restored to his favor. God was believed to have provided such an alternative in the crucifixion. By ac-

[1] Edward A. Ross, *Sin and Society.*

cepting this divine provision, man might find reconciliation with God. The doctrines of atonement which have passed into our theology are based on this conception of God, with its accompanying ideal of moral procedure. The laws of morality were God's laws. Violation of these laws meant God's condemnation. Atonement meant forgiveness by God. The problems of human life were all problems between the individual and God. To be sure, forgiveness could be conditioned upon social virtues. But these virtues were valued because they were requirements of God. The Catholic penitent, for example, gives alms, not because of a direct interest in the poor, but because charity is required by God's priest as a condition of forgiveness.

But the same process which has dimmed the old conception of sin has also made a monarch-God unreal. When the doctrine of evolution discarded the special creation of man, it made inevitable a changed conception of God. Man owes his origin not to a transcendent creative act, but to the slow working-out of a world-process. The creator-God becomes the immanent power in the universe rather than the outside monarch. Add to this scientific view the

political fact that democracy is the self-evident form of society for us. Laws do not come from above but from the people themselves. Our political regulations must be referred to an immanent authority. The right of a given procedure is to be found in the approval of the people rather than in the dictates of a monarch. Moreover, in ethics we have discovered that moral laws are not to be referred to a transcendent source. The principles of right and wrong have grown up in the history of the race, and owe their existence to their ability to promote human welfare, rather than to some superhuman sanction. It is true that our liturgies, hymns, and theologies retain the picture of a monarch-God, but this conception is having less and less power over men. Do we really fear an angry God today? Do preachers proclaim the wrath of the Almighty against men? Does the vision of a literal final judgment influence our conduct? Those conceptions which constituted the moral strength of the religion of a monarch-God are softened and reinterpreted today. Heaven and hell are "states of character." The judgment of God is the actual moral state in which a man finds himself at any time. To win the approval of God one has simply to achieve a character

which will merit approval. And if a man chooses not to do this, it would seem that the only hell which awaits him is the consciousness of being separated from a God whose presence he never wanted anyway. We need only state these current modern modifications of doctrine to see plainly that a theology which attempts to expound the deepest meaning of life in terms taken from an outgrown conception of the relation of God to the world is powerless. The church today is vaguely feeling this impotence, though it is perplexed when it seeks to remedy it.

Atonement, then, cannot today be set forth as the propitiation of an angry monarch-God. The need for atonement must be found where there is a real sense of sin. This means that reparation is immediately due to humanity whose rights have been outraged. In the social movements of the time we can read the steady determination of our age that our evils shall be so atoned for. The social sinners are actually under a curse which is silently being breathed from thousands of human hearts. And this curse can be annulled in only one way—by the repentance of greedy men, and their identification of themselves with the rightful interests of humanity. Just as the God of the Bible

demanded repentance and righteousness as the indispensable condition of atonement, so humanity today demands repentance and conversion of heart.

Many of the proposed reconstructions of the theory of the atonement fail to grip the conscience of the age just because they begin with the God of traditional theology, rather than with the bald fact that man has acted damnably toward his fellows. In view of the current criticism that the church is too lenient toward social and industrial sinners, it is a doubtful procedure to attempt to reinstate Christian doctrine by preaching the love rather than the wrath of God. To set forth the fatherliness of God under these circumstances means too often sentimentalism instead of rigorous moral conviction. To transfer primacy from one divine attribute to another does not reach the real difficulty. Our trouble is with the general conception of God in the older theology rather than with any particular aspect of it. A God who must be discovered by philosophical argument or by exegesis of an ancient literature is an academic deity. Even to begin with "Christ's conception of God" may mean an artificial starting-point, if such a conception

is an intellectual acquisition without the moral fire which is kindled only by concrete experience. Thus even the admirable expositions of the doctrine of atonement by Sabatier[1] and by Stevens[2] will seem to many a man like academic meditations. Fatherliness on the part of God is not an adequate starting-point in the presence of the desperate moral issues of which we are part and parcel. The crime of wicked men against humanity is much more real to the present age than is the crime of man against God. And reality demands that we begin with this poignant moral consciousness of our debt to humanity.

But, after all, is this not parallel to the attitude of the prophets and of Jesus himself? Did not Isaiah find that current religious interpretations of atonement were encouraging laxity? Did he not recall men to the primary facts of social morality? To be sure, he put his moral appeal in the form of a "thus saith the Lord." But even in this form it meant an abandonment of a theology which held God to be too easy-going. Did not Jeremiah derive his message from the actual social and political conditions

[1] *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (Putnam, 1904).
[2] *The Christian Doctrine of Salvation* (Scribners, 1906).

of his time? And did not this mean an abandonment of the traditional conception of the ways of God with men? Did not Jesus demand that one who seeks forgiveness from God must first ask if he has wronged his brother, and must forego sacrifice at the altar until he has become reconciled with the man whom he has injured? If, then, we today adjust our theology to the moral demands of social life, shall we not be treading in the path marked out by the prophets and by Jesus?

The fact is, we have not yet satisfactorily reconstructed the doctrine of God to meet the moral demands of our age. The Copernican astronomy, the doctrine of evolution, and the triumph of democracy have all made unreal the older picture of God. With no heaven located above us in space, with no dramatic act of creation, with no actual experience of an earthly monarch, we find a God seated on his throne in the heavens to be a less immediate influence than are the secular forces which press upon us daily. Theologians who have attempted to reconstruct the conception of God in accordance with the notion of divine immanence have, it is true, presented us with a religious ideal which is philosophically and esthetically satis-

fying. But they have failed to bring the moral issue into sharp relief. Now an age which is suffering from moral wrongs cannot be satisfied with a God to whom moral distinctions are mere philosophical refinements. Unless God can be felt to *hate* the sin which humanity hates, men will turn to the social agitator rather than to the Christian church. Philosophically, our conception of God has been reconstructed for a century. Morally the work is yet to be done. And it is to be done, not by the academic interpreter of biblical theology, but by men who share the conviction of the prophets and of Jesus, that God actually *cares* about the moral welfare of his children. Mr. R. J. Campbell has voiced this conviction when he exclaims: "The poor crippled child who has been maimed by a falling rock, and the white-faced match-box maker who works eighteen hours out of the twenty-four to keep body and soul together have surely some sort of claim upon God apart from being miserable sinners who must account themselves fortunate to be forgiven for Christ's sake. . . . . This kind of a God is no God at all. The theologian may call him infinite, but in practice he is finite. He may call him a God of love, but in practice he is spiteful and

silly."[1] And yet Mr. Campbell himself, with his doctrine of divine immanence drawn from Hegelianism, is not able to do complete justice to this problem of making real the God of righteousness, who shall at the same time be immanent.

If God is to be as real to us as he was to the biblical writers, must our new theology not be drawn from our moral awakening rather than from our science and our philosophy? Suppose it were possible for men who are feeling the horror of sweatshops, child-labor, disease-breeding tenements, and white slavery, to feel that they are not simply voicing the protest of humanity but are uttering the condemnation of God Almighty. Should we not then have a social religion of power? Suppose our settlements and our social experiments should become in the minds of men embodiments of God's moral purpose to redeem humanity, should we not have a tremendous revival of religion? These movements for the rescue of men are separated from the religion of the church because they cannot use the redemptive theology of the church. The doctrine of atonement for the coming age must speak in terms which the social worker will understand.

[1] *The New Theology*, p. 20.

Such a theology cannot be constructed off-hand. It cannot be worked out in the study of the scholar. It must grow out of the deeper interpretation of the moral struggle which is so real to us today. But we can perhaps hint at one or two elements which it must emphasize.

1. The God demanded by a modern doctrine of atonement must be something different from the benign immanent presence portrayed by the philosopher. He must be something other than the Therapeutic Love worshiped by some modern cults. The evils of life are not to be so easily eliminated. We cannot reason wrong out of existence, nor can we nullify it by a philosophical definition. Evil is an intensely practical thing, and as such it must be seen to be of importance to God. But this means that such conceptions as impassibility and immutability, which have been inherited from the older metaphysics, cannot be made supreme. If God is really immanent, if he is really at the heart of the cosmic process, then he must actually be bearing the burden of evil in his world, or else he will become the helpless fate-god of pantheism. We need to take the symbols which Bushnell used, and to push them farther. The mother must indeed suffer the

burden of her child's wrong-doing, because she is identified with the child in love. If the immanent God is actually present, not simply as the love of one human being may follow another, but as the life and soul of the artist is in his work, then the marring of that work by the wicked will of man must cause more than a sympathetic pain. It is an actual injury wrought to the life-purpose of God. Not an injury to the mere honor of God. Not a mere violation of his laws. But an actual defeat, for the time being at least, of his dearest ideal. A suffering God, bearing the burden of the evil in his world—this must be the conception of the coming theology. This is already a familiar idea in modern religious thought. But so long as the conception is linked to the far-away God of the older transcendent philosophy, it is sentimental rather than morally potent. It does not closely enough identify God with the moral struggle. Now if there shall arise some prophet who can interpret the moral wrestling and suffering of our age as the life of God who strives and suffers with his children, we shall have again a gospel with power. Evil costs something to God himself. That affirmation is at the basis of all substitutionary theories of the

atonement. And to eliminate this element of cost means to fail to see the deepest significance of sin.

2. The above conception of God makes possible the next step in the reconstruction of the doctrine of atonement. If God is not separate from humanity, if he is actually bearing the burden of the evil done to his children, then atonement made to an outraged humanity is atonement made to God. And God has a right to demand it, just because it is not a case of God versus humanity, but of God in humanity versus sinners against humanity. To contemplate forgiveness without atonement of some sort would be repugnant to us. We do not wish our criminals to be freed because of sentimentality. We have little interest in the technical question whether a man is acquitted or not in the courts. The only satisfaction with which democracy can be content is that the man who has been anti-social, who has selfishly wronged others for his own profit, shall actually share and approve the social consciousness which condemns him for his wrong. Mere external punishment does not reach to the root of the matter. Democracy demands conversion—a change of heart—as the supreme atonement for

the sins of the past. And if this takes place, democracy is willing, nay glad, to take upon itself the consequences of the wrong, to endure the pains resulting from past evils in order to set free the converted soul to devote its energies to the social welfare. Is this attitude of humanity not an echo of the words of Micah 6:8: "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God"? Is it not parallel to the teaching of Paul that redemption cannot be effected in any external way, but must mean the identification of the believer with Christ? "There is now, therefore, no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." To Paul, Christ represented the sum-total of the suffering which should rightly belong to man because of sin. And the sinner could be forgiven only as he identified himself with those very sufferings which he had tried to evade. To be sure Paul thought of penalty where we think of consequences. But atonement meant not only that Christ should suffer, but that sinners should voluntarily identify themselves with him. A similar identification of the sinner with the suffering caused by wrong is demanded by the modern democratic spirit. And if the imma-

nent God shall reveal himself in human history the social conversion of a man may have much the same religious value as Paul's doctrine of mystical union with Christ.

3. Finally, what significance will the cross of Christ have? It, too, must be interpreted on the basis of belief in a God who is immanent in humanity. The cross was not a device by which a far-away God enabled men to cancel their debt to him. The significance of Jesus cannot be made clear to modern thought by starting from a transcendent divine decree, or by attempting to define the transcendent deity of Christ. Men will inevitably ask the question whether Jesus has a positive place in the moral struggle which is so real to them. Did he actually feel the power of temptation? Did he truly taste the bitterness which is inevitable for one who tries to walk uprightly in a world of injustice and sin? Did he, without compromise or flinching, stand firm for the social righteousness which is of primary concern to us? It is only as Jesus can be shown to have made the most complete identification of himself with the moral rights of humanity that he can be the redeemer of men. To locate his significance in some transcendent "substance"

or some supernatural physical power would be to remove him from the real moral conflict where we so bitterly need a God incarnate. But if the world shall come to believe that in Jesus we have the most perfect expression of that ideal toward which humanity yearns, if we can feel that he took upon himself without evasion the burden of this moral strife, and was faithful to the ideal even at the cost of crucifixion, then we can believe that Jesus is the incarnation of the immanent God who is sharing with men the burden of evil. And to know that Jesus, the perfect expression of the moral will of the immanent God, was crucified because he would not be false to the divine purpose means that the cross becomes the eternal symbol of identification with God. Death itself cannot defeat God. The moral redemption of humanity is God's eternal purpose, cost what it may. In the light of this vision, we may perhaps rise above the delicacy of an age which wants religion to cure pain, and may see again, as did the prophet of the exile, that suffering is the royal road by which the elect may lead the nations of the earth to the kingdom of God, if suffering be not robbed of its moral power. The cross of Christ will be no longer a problem for sen-

timental sermons but will be the heroic standard by which the armies of the church shall again conquer the world. Sacrifice and suffering are God's means of winning men to him. Nothing is more needed than such an interpretation of the doctrine of atonement for our age.

The doctrine of the atonement seeks to show how men who are truly repentant may find peace with God. Evangelical Christianity has protested against any modification of the doctrine which should omit this religious emphasis. Does such a conception as has been outlined in this chapter do justice to this important element? If it does not, it can hardly lay claim to a rightful place in Christianity. The "moral-influence" theories of the atonement have generally been criticized at just this point. They have seemed to stop when man has been persuaded by the cross to repent. They have not shown how the cross assures the penitent of divine forgiveness and favor. But an examination of such criticisms will show that those who make them are holding the picture of the transcendent God, to whom the cross was external, and from whom, therefore, must come a message not contained in the moral influence of the cross itself. If,

however, God is immanent, he is in the cross. The appeal which it makes is his appeal. And no one can hope to attain peace with God who makes the cross external to himself. Paul, who made so much of the significance of the death of Christ, also insisted that atonement meant the identification of the sinner in spirit with the Christ who died on the cross. Salvation comes, not because of a transaction between God and man, but because man may share the very life of God if he identifies himself with the way of the cross. Do we not, in our expositions of the biblical doctrine, often overlook the integral place which missionary consecration had in the conception of atonement? Was it not moral zeal for saving men quite as much as his theology which gave to Paul his religious assurance? Did not the prophets of Israel draw their consciousness of being the elect of God from their actual experience of devotion to the purposes of God? Is there any real atonement which does not involve at-one-ment with the sacrificial spirit of the cross?

After all, doctrine in any age is simply an attempt to make consistent the reality which comes through actual experience. The biblical doctrines are interpretations of the biblical

experience. That experience was necessarily different from ours because of different physical, political, social, and scientific environment. But in one respect we are precisely where man has always been. We cannot undo the evil which we have wrought. We can only "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well." We must leave in God's hands the consequences of our past wickedness. The doctrine of atonement means that God assumes this burden, and enables the sinner to find through repentance and consecration an assurance of union with God which nothing can disturb. Nowhere do we find religious attainment interwoven with moral regeneration as in the Bible. Whenever mankind longs for a religious deliverance which shall at the same time create moral power, it must turn to the Bible for its inspiration; for here is the revelation of the supreme source of man's deliverance from sin.

APPENDIX

LISTS OF BOOKS ON THE IDEA OF ATONEMENT

APPENDIX

LISTS OF THE MORE IMPORTANT BOOKS ON THE IDEA OF ATONEMENT

I. OLD TESTAMENT

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